

**The United States - Republic of Korea Security Relationship,  
1953-1960: Great Power and Small State**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates South Korea's security behaviour vis-à-vis the United States and that of the U.S. towards Korea. The significance of this study lies in its emphasis upon relations between South Korea and the United States during the 1953-1960 period from the perspective of the patron-client state relationship.

This study analyses the issues and historical events in order to trace the development of each nation's strategy, leverages, and tactics towards the other. Each chapter is related to the U.S. security commitment policy to South Korea, and South Korea's response in the frame work of the big power and small state relationship. The Introduction explains the purpose and importance of the research and the analytical framework. Chapter 1 analyses U.S.-South Korean diplomatic seesawing and Korean President Rhee's bargaining position during the Korean armistice negotiations. Chapter 2 traces the post-armistice period and the Korean Political Conference at Geneva during 1953-1954. As the Korean Armistice Agreement was a temporary measure to secure a complete cessation of hostilities, the Geneva Conference of 1954, intended to establish a political settlement, was a significant issue in the post-armistice period. Chapter 3 analyses U.S. security and military policy following the Korean War. The question of the proposed reduction of ROK forces and the redeployment of U.S. forces in Korea in connection with the 'New Look' policy were troublesome issues between Seoul and Washington, over which the two governments exerted their bargaining power. Chapter 4 deals with Rhee's conflicts with the U.S. concerning the normalisation of South Korea-Japan relations, U.S. economic policy towards Korea and its negative effects on Rhee's Government, and Rhee's undemocratic rule and dispute with the U.S. concerning Korean political affairs. Chapter 5, the conclusion of this study, summarises the research findings.

As power and administration in South Korea were highly centralised under Rhee, it is important to ask to what extent did he, as the leader of the weaker state, manage and manipulate a bargaining position in Korea's relations with the United States.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States
BAR	Browning Automatic Rifle
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIC	Counterintelligence Corps
CINCFE	Commander in Chief, Far East
CINCUNC	Commander in Chief, United Nations Command
ECA	Economic Cooperation Agreement
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAC	Military Armistice Commission
MAP	Military Assistance Programme
MDA	Mutual Defense Assistance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NNIT	Neutral Nations Inspection Teams
NNRC	Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission
NNSC	Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
NSC	National Security Council
OCB	Operations Coordinating Board
POWs	Prisoners of War
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
USOM	United States Operations Mission
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## Introduction

In order to analyse U.S.-South Korean relations, three paradigms seem to be applicable: realism; interdependence; and the patron-client relationship in the form of a big power and a small state.

Realism is one of the oldest theories in international relations and has been employed to analyse international politics and to establish foreign policy by most politicians and diplomats. It maintains that the struggle for power and security is the dominant logic in world politics. Nation-states, as rational and autonomous actors, seek to maximise their own interests as defined in terms of power and security. Raymond Aron and Hans J. Morgenthau seem to share the opinion that because of international anarchy, military capability is the decisive element for a power base.<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Waltz argues that states can exercise some control over their propensity to use violence by endeavouring to maintain strategic equilibrium between the major powers; the balance of power is rational as long as there is no realistic alternative to the states system; and, moreover, to the extent that states comply with the principles of the balance of power they can enjoy a limited yet significant influence over the international-systemic forces around them.<sup>2</sup> They argue that asymmetrical dependence can be obvious in international politics. Unlike the idealist, the realist maintains that the alliance between states could be changed under the condition of national interests, and that the distribution of power in the international system is extremely unequal. In this context, a small group of states

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<sup>1</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979), pp. 127-128.



stands out in international politics and, together with the Great Powers, are the main subjects in international politics for analysts of Realism. In this paradigm, realists criticise the domestic power struggles in a state attempting to adjust their conflicting interests. They believe that this adjustment process hinders and delays urgent measures to cope with the swift change of international situations, like wars.

Interdependence theory is also applicable to the analysis of two countries' relations. Many of the important articles and books on interdependence have derived from dissatisfaction with the Realist assumptions. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye characterise international politics as complex interdependence. This emphasises multiple channels of contact between societies, an absence of hierarchy among issues and a minor role for the use of force. Interdependence means that states are mutually dependent on one another for things valued by their populations, such as peace, security, power, cultural goods, etc. Interdependence encompasses both conflictive and cooperative interactions amongst states. This relationship rests far more on mutually beneficial economic or security interchange with little apparent asymmetry in contributions. This theory includes the independent role that transnational and international organisations can play. But some scholars maintain different views. Kenneth Waltz argues that interdependence characterises much of the European state system before the First World War. By contrast, the current world displays more independence and dependence. He points out that large and economically well developed countries can more quickly move towards an autarkic condition. On the other hand, low economic capability leads to dependence upon another state of higher economic capability.

In Power and Interdependence, Keohane and Nye argued that asymmetrical interdependence can be a source of power. They distinguish two kinds of



interdependence, sensitivity interdependence and vulnerability interdependence. The former means “liability to costly effects imposed from outside before policies are altered to try to change the situation.” The latter can be defined “as an actor’s liability to suffer costs imposed by external events even after policies have been altered.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, interdependence could not be totally symmetrical and equally beneficial to each party. The relationship between developed countries is likely to be sensitive interdependence, while the relationship between developed countries and developing countries is one of vulnerable interdependence. The former is evident in U.S. relations with its NATO partners. The latter relationship is based on the positive gains for a developing country from participating in the capitalist world economic structure and from engaging itself in the reciprocity of the world economy. Some scholars reject this argument and stress that under this relationship, the autonomy of developing countries can be highly restricted.<sup>4</sup> As the bargaining position of a developing country is weaker and more disadvantaged than a developed one, this relationship is likely to convert to dependency.

Some scholars of international relations emphasise interactions between the great powers and the small states.<sup>5</sup> Their relationships are defined as patron-client state

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Power and Interdependence, World Politics in Transition (Boston: Little Brown, 1977), pp. 10-13.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Celso Furtado, Economic Development of Latin America (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1979); Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970)

<sup>5</sup> For example, David Vital, The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), and The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Robert O. Keohane, ‘The Big



relationships, which may be distinguished from other forms of bilateral interaction by the dominance of several key elements. Firstly, there is generally a dramatic difference between the military capabilities of the states involved. The client, by itself, cannot become a major military force in international politics; nor can it completely guarantee its own security by itself. This means that the principal security transfers between patron and client are directional in nature, flowing from the former to the latter. Secondly, the client is a prominent factor in the patron's competitiveness. The more advantage the patron gains over its competitors through its association with its client, the more the patron will value the relationship, often in apparent contradiction to the material benefits which the patron derives from the relationship. This aspect of patron-client state relationships is manifested by the patron providing specific funds and items of military equipment for concessions from the client which will readily translate into advantages over the patron's opponents.

It is apparent that there is an incompatibility of goals between the patron-client states in the relationship. The patron, whatever its specific objectives in the relationship might be, seeks to exert some degree of control over the client. This control can take many forms, but in general it implies the surrendering of some measure of the client's autonomy to the patron. The patron is willing to pay a much higher price in the relationship if the client can provide some valuable advantage for the patron over the patron's adversaries. It is generally agreed that based on the scope of foreign policy

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Influence of Small Allies', Foreign Policy, 2 (Spring 1971), pp. 161-182; Robert L. Rothstein, Alliances and Small Powers (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1968); George Liska, Alliances and the Third World (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968); Alan Ned Sabrosky, 'Allies, Clients and Encumbrances', International Security Review, 5 (Summer 1980), pp. 117-149; Marshall Singer, Weak States in a World of Powers (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1972)



interest, small powers have limited interests in international politics. Their policies, consequently, are designed to achieve the limited objective of the security of their own territory. Big powers' interests are not restricted to their own territory and particular regions, but are concerned with the issues of the world at large. Smaller states, in the Cold War international system, assume a value to the superpowers based not only upon the smaller state's intrinsic worth but also upon its ability to put the other super power at a disadvantage. These smaller states then become scarce resources which are sometimes able to extract a considerable price for their particular contribution to the global balance of power. Their value, then, becomes rooted in their role in superpower competition. Even though there are many definitions of the small power, Robert Rothstein's contention of the small power's situation are applicable to South Korea during Rhee's regime as Rothstein focuses on a particular category of the small power and its security dilemma. He defines the small power's situation as follows: (a) outside help is required; (b) the state has a narrow margin of safety, with little time for correcting mistakes; and (c) the state's leaders see its weakness as essentially unalterable. They believe that they are potentially threatened by the policies of the great powers.<sup>6</sup>

Three paradigms, realist theory, interdependence theory, or patron-client theory, could explain the U.S.-South Korean relationship since the establishment of Korea in 1948. As the two countries have come to relate closely to each other in political, economic, and social affairs, each paradigm could not fully characterise the complex nature of the relationship in the last fifty years. However, the post-Korean War period during the 1950s can be explained by the patron-client paradigm only. In the militarily

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<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Rothstein, Alliance and Small Powers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 29-34.



bipolar world after the Korean War, patron-client state relationships were primarily security-fulfilling in nature. Even though there were other aspects of such relationships, security transactions were the most evident and pervasive.

During that period, economic interests between the two countries were not critical. Military and economic aid to South Korea was provided for security objectives only. As a result, Interdependence Theory was not relevant to that period since there was no possibility that the two countries would share cooperative interactions. In strict terms, as realists maintained, there was a great power gap between the U.S. and South Korea with the latter depending heavily on the former for its security, by which understanding interdependence theory was not applicable to President Rhee's era.

Realist theory disregards the possibility that a small state could exert its influence over the big powers to extract considerable concessions from them. South Korea in this period was awarded a lot of concessions and assistance from the U.S. by virtue of its particular contribution to U.S. strategy. It also ignored the importance of domestic politics being closely linked to foreign policy. Leaders in essence may seek to counter internal rather than external threats to their rule by entering into international alignments. Political power groups or interest groups in a state could affect its foreign policy. In the United States, the dispersal of political power inherent in the structure of the federal government has created many opportunities for bureaucratic and societal interests to challenge presidential policies.

With the end of World War II and the Japanese surrender to the Allies in 1945, Korea suddenly found itself divided by the Allied powers, leaving the area north of the 38th parallel under the Soviet Union's control and the area to the south under the

control of the United States. Due to its unique geopolitical and strategic location, the Korean peninsula has historically occupied a central role in regional politics, and any changes or shifts of power in the region have greatly affected the status and politics of the country.

From the period of its formation, South Korea acknowledged that the U.S. would be the principal source of all the kinds of assistance it needed. There are a variety of issues and dilemmas in the relationship between the United States and South Korea. Of these, in the international political setting, national security perspectives are the dominant basis for U.S.-South Korean policy making.

After the U.S. had first defined its strategic interests in Northeast Asia in a manner that left South Korea outside its defence perimeter, the Korean War dramatically changed its security policy towards South Korea by creating an awareness of the strategic importance of Korea to U.S. containment objectives. Since the Korean War the U.S. has held the key position in the global balance of power system. The principal aims of U.S. security policy towards Korea have been to prevent further hostilities and to maintain a military balance on the peninsula as a means of sustaining regional stability amongst the major powers. In particular, the US military presence has established the U.S. as the dominant force in Korean security affairs as well as in international politics in Northeast Asia.

The most apparent element of U.S. involvement in Korea was its pervasive military presence. The defence of South Korea as a front line in the global containment of communism has been in the U.S. national interest. The compulsion to counter its rivals, the Soviet Union and the PRC (People's Republic of China), everywhere in the world was the crucial point in maintaining U.S. interest in the world during the 1950s. In terms of regional interest, the security of Japan was another important issue because



it was regarded as an eventual economic partner. At the same time, with the collapse of the Nationalist Chinese on the Asian mainland in 1949, Japan replaced China as the country the United States hoped would shortly become its principal Asian political ally. South Korea was particularly crucial to the defence of Japan, the keystone of the U.S. security system in East Asia. Moreover, U.S. behaviour towards its commitment in Korea was viewed by the U.S.'s Asian allies as a litmus test of the reliability of U.S. commitments elsewhere, particularly in Japan.

In connection with the reversal of its perception of the ROK (Republic of Korea) as a crucial part of its forward defence zone against Communist expansion, the U.S. altered its policies from providing only limited military assistance to making available large amounts of military aid. This was designed to strengthen South Korean forces to the point where, backed by the United States, they could effectively deter North Korean aggression.<sup>7</sup> Although the security interests of South Korea were local, not global like those of the United States, the two countries agreed on the importance of deterring North Korea, an ally of the superpower rival of the U.S., but did not always agree on the amount of U.S. or Korean resources that should be allocated to this objective.

There are a variety of indicators that demonstrate the crucial role the United States has played in the survival and development of South Korea in the post-Korean War period. The war left South Korea devastated and its economy shattered. U.S. military and economic aid to South Korea, that was justified by the U.S. government largely on national security grounds, represented important resources to support the very existence of South Korea. With such U.S. assistance, South Korea developed a

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<sup>7</sup> Gerald L. Curtis and Sung-Joo Han, The U.S.-South Korean Alliance (Washington D.C.: Heath and Company, 1983), pp. 38-39.



substantial military capability. In addition to this military assistance, the U.S. realised the need to supplement it with economic aid. Based on the belief that strengthening the ROK forces was not sufficient for countering Communist expansion, the U.S. provided a great deal of economic aid to South Korea. This aid was especially significant during the Eisenhower period.

President Syngman Rhee exerted his influence to maximise American aid, minimise American intervention, and instigate American military and foreign policies that conformed with his attitudes, especially with respect to the Communists and Japan. His long residence in America with the Korean independence movement had transformed him into an arch-conservative in his views on communism, views which were later to make him suspicious of U.S. détente policy towards the Soviet Union. These views were reinforced by the division of Korea following the Korean armistice. He tried to exert influence directly upon Congress, the Administration, and the public, to the constant annoyance of the State Department and the American Embassy in South Korea. He was known to be more distrustful of the State Department than the Republicans were. He considered it pro-Communist as well as pro-Japanese.<sup>8</sup>

On the establishment of South Korea in the southern part of the Korean peninsula in 1948, Rhee embraced a strong anti-Communist and anti-Japanese stance, concentrating the nation's attention on these issues at the sacrifice of his country's political and economic development. Fearing the re-emergence of Japanese power in Asia, he opposed American policies which reinforced Japan, especially after the San Francisco Treaty of 1951 that gave back Japanese sovereignty. His anti-Japanese

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<sup>8</sup> This negative attitude towards the State Department stemmed from the fact that, in his independence movement in America, he was entirely disregarded by the State Department while attempting to assert Korea's independence from Japan.



posture prevented the U.S. from establishing a NATO-type military organisation in East Asia, for which the inclusion of Japan was essential as the Eisenhower administration wished to impose the responsibility of leading the organisation on Japan.

As South Korea was under the tight control of Rhee who dominated national government from 1948 to 1960, the Eisenhower administration believed that it should base its overall position largely upon its relationship with President Rhee, who was well versed in manipulating American power for the security of a small country. In many cases, Eisenhower and Dulles were dealing with Rhee on the issues of Korean domestic and foreign policy under a one-directional relationship of assistance and influence. The United States was the provider of assistance and South Korea the recipient. Heavy dependence on US aid characterised Rhee's regime. By heavily depending on the US aid programme, Rhee's government raised the question of sovereignty.

Since South Korea was seen as only one segment of its global geopolitical strategy, the United States often made major policy decisions unilaterally, giving little thought to the serious consequences they would have for South Korea, and it exerted considerable influence over South Korea's domestic and foreign policies, as could be seen in the role it played in the resignation of President Rhee in 1960. Like other countries, South Korea through its foreign policy sought to advance its security, autonomy, and economic prosperity. These goals often conflicted with each other. In its policy towards the U.S., Rhee's Government sought to maximise U.S. support in providing for its security and economic progress while minimising the negative effects of the asymmetry inherent in the relationship. In this period of foreign aid from the U.S., it was difficult to distinguish military from economic aid. In most cases, they were so interrelated that the United Nations Command (UNC) could control and advise about the aid programmes.



Since the United States basically considered the role of South Korea in the light of its strategic position in East Asia, it often ignored the economic development of South Korea. In the last years of Rhee's rule, South Korea suffered a drastic cut in military and economic aid from the U.S., which was partly intended to damage Rhee's Government. According to the domino theory and cold war conceptions, the United States focused on its security position concerning friendly nations, regarding them as key players in protecting American interests from Communist expansion. Aware of this, the client states frequently manipulated an advantage in intra-alliance bargaining. These security concerns thus inhibited the United States from reacting as vigorously against the abuse of democracy in South Korea as it might otherwise have done.

Rhee's achievements in getting concessions from the United States during the Korean War and the Korean Political Conference through stubbornness and unilateral action were noteworthy. His release of Communist prisoners of war immediately before the Korean armistice, and refusal to agree to an armistice or even to a political conference for settling the problem of the armistice, gained him a mutual defence treaty and a large amount of economic and military aid when the Eisenhower administration desperately wanted to end the war. His demonstrations against the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission's inspection induced the U.S. to suspend the armistice agreement in order to drive away Communist representatives. Had it not been for an American re-evaluation of South Korea's strategic and political importance, Rhee's tactics would not have worked. Nevertheless, South Korea might have benefited far less from American aid programmes without Rhee whose leadership was quite ingenious in exploiting the U.S. position in the period of the Cold War. Washington accepted Rhee's leadership as inevitable until 1960, despite the difficulties of dealing with him.



A great number of scholarly works on Korean-American relations have been published. However, most of these works have been concentrated on the subject of the Korean War, or have only examined broad periods in U.S.-South Korean relations, focusing on American military, economic, and diplomatic policies.<sup>9</sup> Recently some scholars and students have emphasised the two countries' relations in the context of the big power and small state alliance. Like others, they deal with the Korean War period or the Korean Political Conference.<sup>10</sup> This thesis, on the other hand, will concentrate on the period from the beginning of the Eisenhower administration's work for a Korean cease-fire to the resignation of President Rhee, and will analyse the two countries' security relationships within the scope of big power-small state interaction. This period provides an ideal case study of small state behaviour in client position in response to big power control in the bi-polar world situation.

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<sup>9</sup> John Barry Kitch, United States Security Policy Toward Korea, 1945-53: The Origins and Evolution of American Involvement and the Emergence of a National Security Commitment, PhD, Columbia University, 1976; Bruce Cumings, <sup>(ed.)</sup> Child of Conflict (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983); Rosemary Foot, A Substitute for Victory (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Callum A. Macdonald, Korea: The War before Vietnam (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Sydney D. Bailey, The Korean Armistice (London: Macmillan, 1992)

<sup>10</sup> Astri Suhrke, 'Gratuity and Tyranny: The Korean Alliance', World Politics Vol. 25 (July 1973); Chang Jin Park, 'the Influence of Small States upon the Superpowers: United States-South Korean Relations as a case study, 1950-53', World Politics, Vol. 28 (1975); Chae-Jin Lee and Hideo Sato, U.S. Policy Toward Japan and Korea: A Changing Influence Relationship (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982); Gerald L. Curtis and Sung Joo Han, The U.S.-South Korean Alliance (Lexington, MA.: Lexington Books, 1983)



The primary purpose of this study is to describe and analyse the U.S.-South Korea security relationship systematically and comprehensively in a conceptual framework of the interrelationship between a great power and a small power in an alliance system. As power and administration in South Korea were highly centralised under President Rhee, it is important to ask to what extent did Rhee, as the leader of the weaker state, manage and manipulate a bargaining position in Korea's relations with the United States? Actually Rhee's accomplishment in winning benefits for his country from the Eisenhower administration was remarkable in view of his having no recourse except bargaining skill. It is necessary to trace how the Eisenhower administration responded to the emerging international and regional power configuration with its New Look strategy.

This study examines closely the strategic connection between the U.S. and South Korea and their diplomatic interaction from 1953 to 1960, and analyses the issues in historical events in order to trace the development of each nation's strategy, leverages, and tactics towards the other. Each chapter is related to the U.S. security commitment policy to South Korea, and South Korea's responses in the framework of the big power and small power relationship. The organisation of this study is basically chronological.

The Introduction of this study explains the purpose and importance of the research and the analytical framework. Some discussion is devoted to the context of American and Korean foreign policy to see the origin and development of U.S. policy and the emergence of the U.S. commitment towards Korea.

Chapter 1 covers the Korean War, but analyses the resumption of the armistice negotiations, Eisenhower's efforts to end the Korean War, Rhee's opposition to an armistice and his demands to the U.S. for compensation for agreeing to an armistice, and U.S.-South Korean diplomatic seesawing and Rhee's bargaining position. Conflict



and tension prevailed between Washington and Seoul during the period prior to the armistice agreement. An armistice was Eisenhower's pledge to the Americans, but it meant engaging in a hard bargaining process with President Rhee, who must have been disappointed with the indefinite division of his country even after a bloody and miserable war. Thus, while the Eisenhower administration became determined to end the war through an armistice, Rhee deliberately sought to prevent the truce talks. Rhee used exquisite bargaining skills to obtain security guarantees from the United States by manoeuvring to release the Communist POWs, a move which delivered a powerful blow to the truce talks. Whereas the Eisenhower administration were ready to offer a mutual defence treaty, military and economic aid, and a build-up of the ROK forces, they planned to place Rhee in custody if he obstructed an armistice. Rhee in the end accepted the Korean armistice because South Korea was to receive such compensations, which would be linked with the postwar reconstruction and security of the country.

Chapter 2 traces the post-armistice period and the Korean Political Conference during 1953-1954. After the Korean armistice, it was significant that the U.S. asked for Rhee's cooperation in carrying out U.S. policy in the Far East, whereas Rhee's Government attempted to discourage U.S. efforts to reach an agreement with the Communists at the Korean Political Conference. If the U.S. failed to secure South Korea's participation, the conference would be meaningless. President Rhee had an opportunity to use his bargaining power with Eisenhower to build up Korean forces by taking a hard line towards the Geneva Conference in the hope of getting further concessions. In the end, Eisenhower agreed to Rhee's demand for increasing United States responsibility for South Korea's security.

Chapter 3 analyses U.S. security and military policy in the framework of the New Look strategy. U.S.-ROK relations were rooted in the sphere of defence following the



Korean armistice. It was necessary for America to protect South Korea for the defence of the Northern Pacific area, while South Korea desired America's power for the security of its system. The relationship emerged with the signing of the Mutual Defence Treaty in October 1953. The activity of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission and the process of its dissolution with regard to the denunciation of the armistice agreement, and in connection with the introduction of atomic weapons into Korea, became a main point of controversy both between Washington and Seoul, and in intra-departmental relations within the Eisenhower administration. While the US forces were stationed in Korea, a great number of problems occurred because there was no agreement on the legal status of US forces. The U.S. did not want to change a privileged position in Korea which was not recognised by other allies' authorising US military bases. The question of the proposed reduction of ROK forces and the redeployment of US forces in Korea in connection with the 'New Look' policy were troublesome issues between Seoul and Washington, over which the two governments exerted their bargaining power.

Chapter 4 traces the U.S. role in the normalisation of ROK-Japanese relations in the perspective of U.S. military and economic policy towards East Asia. The United States considered Japan to be the heart and soul of the situation in the Far East. After the Korean War, the U.S. wanted to strengthen the economy of South Korea in the light of American security objectives. In this situation, there were some strains between the U.S. and South Korea over Korean economic policies. While Japan became the objective of massive U.S. investments in productive industries, South Korea was mainly the recipient of defence support programmes. Rhee's Government emphasised obtaining more aid and expanding productive capacity but the U.S. desired to supply Japanese-made commodities. The Eisenhower administration had a plan to institute an



anti-Communist regional security organisation in a way which made South Korean-Japanese diplomatic normalisation a prerequisite. However, Rhee's suspicion of Japan's revival impeded early rapprochement.

This chapter examines the conflict between Washington and Seoul with regard to the issue of democratisation of Korean internal affairs and the positive role played by America, along with the student uprising against Rhee's Government in 1960, in the resignation of President Rhee. President Rhee was much more successful in checking U.S. interference in domestic affairs. Since the Eisenhower administration also concentrated on South Korea's security position against the Communists, the political stability of South Korea had been regarded as crucial, and they ignored the deterioration of Korean democratic politics, only remonstrating indirectly. However, acknowledging that Rhee's anti-Japanese stance had jeopardised the normalisation of ROK-Japanese relations, and that Rhee's prestige in Korea had clearly fallen, the United States changed its attitude towards Rhee's Government and took a positive role in the collapse of the Rhee regime.

Chapter 5, the conclusion of this study, summarises the research findings.

Because of the nature of this study, the primary sources employed in the dissertation involved digging through archives and manuscripts. The National Archives and Records Service Center in Washington, D.C., the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas, the Public Record Office in London, and manuscripts at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul, Korea, have numerous diplomatic, economic, and military documents for this period, 1953-1960. The Oral History Collection at the Eisenhower Library has interviews with former American officials in Korea and several State Department officers.

Many of the records relating to U.S.-South Korean relations during the period are contained in the Department of State, decimal file 795.00, in the Diplomatic Branch of the National Archives. Documents in the file include instructions to and reports from U.S. diplomatic officials in Korea, correspondence between the U.S. government and South Korea, and between the State Department and other U.S. government departments. The Modern Military Branch of the National Archives also has important documents on U.S.-South Korean negotiations regarding the armistice, a mutual defence treaty, economic and military aid, and the strengthening of South Korean forces. These are contained in the Record Group 218, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographic File 383.21, Korea.

For my study, the Eisenhower Library provided a great deal of material. The Ann Whitman File revealed the Eisenhower administration's principal military and economic policies towards Rhee's government. John Foster Dulles' Papers were important documents regarding the armistice and the Geneva Conference. The Records of the White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, and the Papers of the White House Office, National Security Council Staff, were worthwhile for tracing the security relationship between the two countries. Extensive research in diplomatic documents and manuscripts has been supplemented by published sources.

The Department of State has published valuable materials: Foreign Relations of the United States; Foreign Ministers Meeting, Berlin Discussions, January 25-February 18, 1954; The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, April 26-June 15, 1954; American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents; Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower; and issues of the Department of State Bulletin.



Korean archival documents have become available recently, and provide good resources for researchers to trace the Korean government's and President Rhee's intentions in dealing with the United States. Before the documents became available, researchers and students who were interested in the two countries' relations depended upon U.S. archival sources alone. Amongst Korean archival documents, the record of communications between President Rhee and the Korean Embassy in the United States is an invaluable resource for analysing Rhee's attitudes towards and methods of coping with the United States' Korean policy.

The Public Record Office in England also provided me with the opportunity to trace the allies' attitudes regarding the U.S. security policy towards South Korea.

Newspapers, both in English and Korean, provided good sources of contemporary views and details.

## **1. Eisenhower and the Korean Armistice**

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 made the United States take a direct and continuing military involvement in South Korea despite a previous reluctance to undertake such a role. Following the policy of containment, the United States was determined to prevent any Communist expansionism. Defending South Korea was viewed as important to the United States, not because of the strategic significance of Korea, but because the North Korean attack was seen as a projection of Soviet Communist influence in the Cold War. The United States had to enter the Korean War in order to establish American credibility as an anti-Communist power. The American actions were approved by the Security Council, which called upon other members of the United Nations to participate in support of South Korea. As a result, fifteen other UN members joined the American military operations in Korea. The root of America's new involvement in Korea was caused primarily by the changing nature of the international environment. By late 1949 and early 1950, a number of developments had begun to induce a major re-evaluation of U.S. strategic thinking. Particularly important were the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb in August 1949 and the fall of Chiang Kai-Shek's regime to the communists in October 1949. These two events caused the U.S. to fear that the global balance of power was shifting to the Communist side. Moreover, the North Korean invasion was perceived as naked aggression inspired and controlled by the Soviet Union, perhaps as a prelude to general war. A radical transformation had occurred in American thinking. Enraged by the charges of McCarthy, the nation had become obsessed with making war on Communism. This new orthodoxy had become exceedingly dangerous to oppose and it explains why no influential voices were raised



against the Korean War. Subsequently, Truman took action that was in line with domestic demands to fight the Communist rising.

From the beginning, however, U.S. involvement in the Korean War was limited to expulsion of the Communist aggressors and localisation of the conflict. These placed heavy restraints on the scope of military operations. The main motivation of the limited war policy of the United States was to avoid provoking a major war with Communist China and the Soviet Union. Therefore, there were limitations not only on the objectives of military operations but also on the use of weapons. The use of nuclear weapons was considered, but was decided against for fear of spreading the war.<sup>1</sup>

The Korean War affected changes to the U.S. strategic outlook on the value of South Korea. The U.S. began to realise the significant role that South Korea could play, not only for the sake of containing communist expansion, but also in protecting offshore island chains in the Far East. The war became a testing ground of the overall containment policy with regard to the security of Europe. It also illustrated to Americans how this small peninsula was intricately linked with the overall system of containment.<sup>2</sup>

The Korean armistice negotiations were one of the hardest bargaining processes of the Cold War period. As the battle lines stabilised, pressures for a political settlement

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Lichterman, 'Korea: Problems in Limited War', in Gordon B. Turner and Richard D. Challener (eds.), National Security in the Nuclear Age: Basic Facts and Theories (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1960), pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup> Nathan White, U.S. Policy toward Korea: Analysis, Alternatives, and Recommendations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 224-226.

of the conflict mounted. In its determination to avert an expanded war in Korea, the British and their European allies pushed the United States to end the war.<sup>3</sup>

There were a number of important reasons why the United States found it difficult to satisfy the demands for greater flexibility at talks with the Communists to cease hostilities. Most important among these was the unpredictable and uncontrollable Syngman Rhee, the South Korean President, who attempted to subvert the process of the negotiations. He often intervened to slow the pace of armistice negotiations. He demanded that the war be continued until all foreign Communists were expelled from the Korean peninsula and the nation was unified under his government. Eisenhower seriously underestimated Rhee's opposition to the armistice. After the initial stumbling in relations with South Korea, Eisenhower adhered to a policy of persuasion, concession, subtle coercion and threats to win over Rhee. These tactics were in part successful, but, in many cases, they were equally matched by Rhee's ability to achieve his own objectives. The Prisoners of War (POWs) issue in particular almost destroyed the prospects of an armistice. The United States considered that it could be exploited for propaganda purposes. The Communists—North Korea and the People's Republic of China—did not approve <sup>of the exploitation of the POW issue by the Americans</sup> pending the negotiations.

This chapter examines the sequence of developments during the Korean War. Firstly, the war situation during the Truman era will be summarised. Secondly, how far Rhee, as a small states' leader, manipulated and influenced the conduct of the United States by exploiting the world's political contraposition during the Korean War will be considered. The preponderance of scholarship on international relations emphasises

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<sup>3</sup> Burton I. Kaufman, The Korean War: Challenge in Crisis, Credibility, and Command (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 130-138.



interactions among the great powers and looks at small states simply as pawns in the arena of great power politics. This perspective claims that the great powers control and dominate small countries, if they remain in the sphere of influence of major powers.<sup>4</sup> However, great powers cannot always translate their power into effective dominance over small countries. A small power, if it pursues its goals effectively, can sometimes influence and manipulate a great power. Finally, this study examines the diplomatic interaction between the United States and South Korea, considering the dilemma of the United States regarding the behaviour of Rhee's Government.

## **U.S. Engagement in the Korean War**

Following the outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula on 25 June 1950, the United States began direct military involvement. President Truman intervened in the Korean conflict with a surprisingly swift movement. However, as the war appeared to become a stalemate, the two opponents realised that they had to acknowledge the possibility of an armistice. As the battle lines stabilised, pressures for a political settlement of the conflict mounted. The Soviet Union had obviously been receptive to the idea of a cease-fire since the early spring of 1951. On 23 June 1951, Jacob Malik, the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, suggested that a cease-fire be arranged as a first step in the negotiation process. The Truman administration was very much in favour of ending the war on the following terms which they regarded to be quite modest: a divided Korea, exchange of all prisoners of war, and an withdrawal of all

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, World Politics: The Menu for Choice (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1981), pp. 81-83.

foreign troops. The war was considerably unpopular with Americans. The administration confronted strong pressures from Congress and the electorate to pull out or to bomb Manchuria and even China. In 1951 America's allies like Great Britain, major Commonwealth and some NATO members were considerably concerned about putting an end to the war through an armistice. They regarded Soviet Union as the chief beneficiary of the war since the USSR was not directly involved in the Korean War. There was a general notion that terminating the war would result in freeing Communist China from its dependence on the Soviet Union, thereby allowing their enmity to grow. Victory was not the key issue for American allies who were only interested in a fair settlement. "A divided Korea, a return to the status quo ante (at the thirty-eighth parallel), would meet their needs admirably."<sup>5</sup>

The Korean war entered a new phase in June 1951. While the fighting continued on a reduced scale especially in terms of the ground forces, there would be no further advances and retreats along the Korean peninsula. The prime aim of the fight was now limited and directed to influence phases of negotiating positions at the cease-fire talks. It was clear, however, that instead of producing a quick settlement, the talks stressed out the 'political and ideological differences' between the two sides.<sup>6</sup>

One of the main obstacles to progress at the armistice negotiations was Syngman Rhee, the South Korean President, who pursued a policy of force to unify Korea. Rhee was bitter about the negotiations which he believed would partition the Korean peninsula. His fear was that the United States would abandon South Korea after the

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<sup>5</sup> Barton J. Bernstein, 'Struggle over the Korean Armistice', in Bruce Cumings (ed.), Child of Conflict (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1983), pp. 262-263.



armistice and lay it open to another invasion from the north. In spite of reassurances from Truman, he continued to obstruct the negotiations.<sup>7</sup> Rhee argued that “if the United Nations Command (UNC) action was prohibited by the United States or the UN General Assembly, then the UN Command should allow South Korean forces to march north on their own with at least some assistance.”<sup>8</sup> Rhee did not share the American view that it was possible to arrive at a political settlement with the Communists. This difference in perceptions was a result of South Korea’s local interests and the United States’ global interests. Truman and Rhee diverged profoundly in their assessment of the significance of the Korean War. Truman felt that any attempt to defeat the Communists decisively in Korea could spark a new world war with atomic bombs. Rhee opined that the time was ripe to attack the Communists, who lacked an atomic capability.<sup>9</sup> Thus Rhee tried to jeopardise the United States’ negotiating plans in his own interest. He pursued an unpredictable course of action. According to John J. Muccio, the American Ambassador in Korea, “Rhee was completely unpredictable and if one method failed to accomplish his purpose, he could be expected to try another if

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<sup>6</sup> Callum A. MacDonald, Korea: The War before Vietnam (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> FRUS, 1950, vol. 7, pp. 644-45, Muccio to Acheson, 10 July 1951; ibid., p. 1418, Muccio to Acheson, 22 December 1951.

<sup>8</sup> Robert T. Oliver, Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942-1960 (Seoul: Panmun Book, 1978), p. 376. The UNC was established provisionally on 7 July and formally on 25 July 1950 under General Douglas MacArthur. It was composed of sixteen UN members supplying combat forces. Of the ground forces operating in Korea when the armistice was signed, 64 per cent were from South Korea, 32 per cent from the United States, and 4 percent from other UN members.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 355.

he could get away with it.”<sup>10</sup> The United States’ pressure on President Rhee to stop obstructing the armistice negotiations continued to build while Rhee proceeded to publicly denounce the idea of an armistice. He exploited a number of rallies that, in most cases, were carried out by pseudo-governmental organisations controlled by Rhee himself. President Truman became frustrated and impatient with Rhee. In his letter to Rhee on 4 March 1952, he insisted that South Korea was obliged to follow the lead of the United States in the United Nations Command and threatened serious consequences if Rhee persisted in his obstruction.<sup>11</sup> In response to the letter, Rhee dispatched a counter-proposal to Truman on 21 March 1952. He offered to accept the American position in exchange for more military aid and a mutual security pact.<sup>12</sup> Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, argued that a U.S.-South Korean mutual defence treaty was unnecessary so long as sufficient UN forces were deployed in Korea. He urged the President to assure Rhee that South Korea would not be abandoned by its allies.<sup>13</sup> All the same, Rhee would not relinquish his campaign for a mutual defence treaty with the United States. This combination of counter-offer and ingenious evasion was characteristic of Rhee throughout the armistice negotiations. He was accustomed to the value of brinkmanship and its limitations between great and small states.

By February 1952, agreement had been reached on most of the key points of earlier disagreement: a line of demarcation, the establishment of a Military Armistice Commission and Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, and referral of the troop

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<sup>10</sup> *FRUS*, 1950, vol. 7, pp. 738-739, The Ambassador in Korea to the Secretary of State, 27 July 1951.

<sup>11</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-1954, vol. 15, pp. 74-76, Harry Truman to the President Rhee, 4 March 1952.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115, President Rhee to Harry Truman, 21 March 1952.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186, Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President, 30 April 1952.



withdrawal issue to a post-armistice political conference.<sup>14</sup> There were few indications in the spring of 1952 that the Truman administration realised its policy of nonforcible repatriation for prisoners of war would long delay the signature of an armistice agreement.

From the beginning of the armistice negotiations, the Communists insisted on the return of all prisoners and the United States continued voluntary repatriation. The Korean War created difficult problems in dealing with POWs. Article 118 of the Geneva convention of 1949 on prisoners of war, which the United States had signed but not ratified, provided that “prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of hostilities.”<sup>15</sup> This provision was especially devised to deal with cases like those involving the Soviet Union, where, after World War II, German and Japanese prisoners had been retained to aid in reconstruction. However, the United States and Great Britain forcibly returned the reluctant Russian soldiers who had defected to Germany’s armies to the Soviet Union. Most of them were forced to go to labour camps and to meet their death.<sup>16</sup> The United States was perplexed with the situation which developed during the Korean War in which a great number of prisoners held by the UN forces refused repatriation. It produced a seemingly gloomy obstacle

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front, Chapter 2, 6, 7, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, Geneva Convention of 1949 for the Protection of War victims (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 129; Peter Lowe, ‘Aspects of the Korean War’, International Studies, (1987/1), p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Lowe, The Origins of the Korean War (London: Longman, 1986), p. 210; Bernstein, ‘Struggle over the Korean Armistice’, pp. 274-275.

when it was interwoven with the intensely ideological character of the armistice negotiations.

Until July 1951, the Truman Administration assumed that all POWs would be automatically returned to their countries after a settlement. Robert A. McClure, the army's chief of psychological warfare, raised the non-repatriation issue for both the humanitarian and propaganda aspects.<sup>17</sup> For the first time, the military side felt it attractive because of psychological warfare, but reluctant to accept because of violation of the Geneva convention and loss of UN prisoners. Nonetheless, Dean Acheson recognised the advantages to psychological warfare and its humane objectives.<sup>18</sup> On 8 February 1952, Acheson urged Truman to endorse voluntary repatriation. Domestic and international public opinion was initially strongly in favour of this. More than anything else, forcible repatriation was strongly opposed by no less than sixty congressmen under the leadership of Senator William Jenner, and thus the administration could avoid a battle with Congress. Acheson was primarily concerned about morality and the Cold War and not domestic politics. There was clear evidence about Communist intentions. The North Korean and Chinese delegations strongly resisted voluntary repatriation. By February 1952, although the Communist governments had not agreed to it, Acheson urged a firm commitment to that position. On 27 February, Truman and the senior members of his administration took the decision of not returning the unwilling POWs. However, this policy did not produce any positive results and instead prolonged a costly

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<sup>17</sup> NA, RG 319, G-3, decimal file 383.6, Brig. Gen. McClure to army chief of staff, 'Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners', 5 July 1951.

<sup>18</sup> FRUS, 1951, vol. 7, Acheson to George Marshall, 27 August 1951.



war, lost the support of allies, and eventually contributed to Truman's political downfall.<sup>19</sup>

Differences arose between Washington and the military on how to proceed in negotiations with the Communists. General Matthew Ridgway and Vice-Admiral Turner Joy, Chief of the UN negotiating team at Panmunjom, thought that Washington was too accommodating to Communist pressure. They believed that "continuing concessions could only indicate weakness to the enemy and that the best course was one of strength and firmness."<sup>20</sup> However, the need to maintain the allies' cooperation forced the Truman administration to refrain from spreading the war along the Korean peninsula. As a result, the plan proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) was rejected. In February, the JCS tried to stress the use of atomic bombs, Chinese Nationalist forces, and guerrilla operations against Mainland China. The intention was to break the deadlock and compel the Communists to surrender to the American demands for an armistice, but their plan was rejected as being too dangerous.<sup>21</sup> Even so, tactical nuclear weapons were stationed in Korea by the Truman administration, and the military wanted to use them to break the stalemate.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Bernstein, 'Struggle over the Korean Armistice', pp. 280-283.

<sup>20</sup> Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> NA, RG 59, lot 61 D 417, State-JCS Meetings, Korea: Show of Forces, 6 February 1952; decimal file 795.00/2-1452, Korea, Webb to Acheson, 'JCS Proposal for Show of Force in the Far East', 14 February 1952.

<sup>22</sup> Shin Dong-A [New East Asia], (November, 1996), pp. 364-379. Philip Corso, as Chief of Special Project Branch, Far Eastern Command, U.S., during the Korean War, reveals that 40 atomic bombs were stationed in a military airport south of Seoul.

The bombings were part of America's expanded naval and air war designed to force concessions from the Communists. On 29 April 1952, General Mark Clark replaced General Matthew Ridgway as UN Commander and almost immediately tried to resolve the POW issue. He insisted on bombing key targets in North Korea and was allowed to do so. In late June, the American Air Force bombed the Suiho hydroelectric power station near the river Yalu, thereby creating problems for the European allies. The State Department had failed to inform Great Britain before the attack. The attack caused an outrage in other nations participating in the UN effort in Korea, while Lord Alexander of Tunis, the British Minister of Defence in Washington at the time, was not informed at all.<sup>23</sup>

Clark told Washington that "a forceful action is more conducive to agreements with the Communists than a softer approach."<sup>24</sup> The effects of that strategy were ambiguous as the Communists did not instantly react and showed no sign of compliance. The bombing did not cause the Communists to soften their position at the negotiating table. Clark and Harrison, who had replaced Turner Joy as Chief UN negotiator, eventually settled on five alternatives for the disposition of the POWs not desiring repatriation. Four of them involved the delivery of the POWs to the custody of neutral nations while the fifth provided simply for their delivery to the demilitarised zone where the prisoners would go to the side of their choice.<sup>25</sup> They believed that the Communists would reject these proposals and that this would result in the termination

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<sup>23</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, pp. 356-358, Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-JCS Meeting, 'Air Attacks on North Korea Power Plants', 25 June 1952.

<sup>24</sup> NA, JCS Records, decimal file 383.21, Korea, 10 July 1952.

<sup>25</sup> Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 278.



of the armistice negotiations. Clark's willingness to risk the termination of armistice negotiations was wholly consistent with his desire to press for a military conclusion to the war. On 29 September he called for reinforcements, the expansion of the ROK force, the employment of two Nationalist Chinese divisions, the bombing of Manchuria and the employment of nuclear weapons in order to achieve a settlement on the U.S. terms.<sup>26</sup> However, Truman was not prepared to take dramatic measures which would mean further problems with the allies. Some of the allies, led by the British, were looking for all possible means to a compromise. It was initiated by India when Krishna Menon argued for the removal of the POWs from military control to the custody of a neutral commission consisting of Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Czechoslovakia and India. The POWs would be held for an indefinite period for the choice of repatriation.<sup>27</sup> The lack of allies' support for America's inflexible attitudes on the armistice negotiations forced Washington to accept Menon's proposal, with amendments on two issues, the composition of the neutral commission and the length of time the POWs could be held in custody. The Indian resolution was finally passed on 3 December 1952, opposed only by the Soviet bloc.<sup>28</sup> A solution to the POW issue was to be conveyed to the Eisenhower administration.

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<sup>26</sup> Mark W. Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), pp. 74-83; J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 323-324.

<sup>27</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, pp. 476-477, 485-486, 570, 640, 643, 646.

<sup>28</sup> Callum A. MacDonald, Korea: The War before Vietnam (New York: The Free Press, 1986), pp. 169-173; Peter Lowe, 'The Settlement of the Korean War', in John W. Young (ed.), The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration 1951-55 (Leicester University Press, 1988), pp. 219-222.

## **The Eisenhower Administration and Its Commitment to Korea**

Upon taking office in January 1953 the Eisenhower administration's most important foreign policy objective was the settlement of the war in Korea. During the Presidential election of 1952, Eisenhower had promised to bring an end to the conflict on an honourable basis. Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, regarded the concluding of armistice negotiations as a matter of the greatest urgency amongst their foreign policy aims.<sup>29</sup>

The end of the war was both a political and military dilemma for Dulles. Influential Republicans wanted to end the war by increasing military pressure on the Communists. To some Republicans it was then presumed that the Korean conflict would end with a great victory, that would serve as a prelude to the return of Chiang Kai Shek to power in China.<sup>30</sup> Dulles did not want a cease-fire in Korea. When Peking responded favourably to a proposed Indian compromise for a settlement in Korea in early 1953, he reacted with sorrow to the prospect of a premature settlement, and said, "I don't think we can get much out of a Korean settlement until we have shown before all Asia our clear superiority by giving the Chinese one hell of a licking."<sup>31</sup> He would have preferred a clear-cut military victory, but he had to abandon his stand because Eisenhower had committed himself to ending the war.

The obstacles blocking an early conclusion of an armistice, however, remained twofold: first, Communist intransigence on the principle of non-forcible repatriation of

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<sup>29</sup> Lowe, The Origins of the Korean War, pp. 212-213.

<sup>30</sup> New York Times, 13 February 1952 and 4 March 1952.

<sup>31</sup> Emmet J. Hughes, The Ordeal of Power (New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 104-105.



POWs, which had already delayed the talks for one and half years and led to an indefinite break of negotiations in October 1952; and second, President Rhee's uncompromising attitude towards Washington over the policy of reunification by force. The Eisenhower administration had no intention of changing current policy on non-forcible repatriation. If the policy were changed, the political damage would be too great. With respect to the problem of reconciling Rhee to an armistice rather than a military solution, his real intentions had not been tested and the result was uncertain. In the Spring of 1953, as the armistice negotiations had not progressed, Washington considered taking offensive action to secure a better position over the armistice. Eisenhower and Dulles made a series of threatening statements and took measures which included unleashing Nationalist China from the restraints Truman had imposed at the outbreak of the Korean War and announcing the possible use of nuclear weapons.<sup>32</sup> The consideration of using nuclear weapons characterised the Eisenhower administration's position towards the Korean War. The military leaders participating in the National Security Council (NSC) were inclined to use tactical nuclear weapons to inflict a devastating strike on enemy forces.<sup>33</sup> At the meeting on 27 March, the question

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<sup>32</sup> Sherman Adams, Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 48-49; Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, 1953-1956 (New York: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 178-183.

<sup>33</sup> The NSC was created by the National Security Act of 1947, which also mandated the establishment of a unified Department of Defense and a Central Intelligence Agency. It, consisting of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and other cabinet and subcabinet officials in an advisory capacity as required, is empowered to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to national security so as to enable the departments of government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving national security.



of the use of atomic weapons in Korea was raised. It was referred to an ad hoc committee of civilian consultants that expressed the attitude that “we have gone to great expense to develop these weapons, we have tested them only in such tests as we could conduct ourselves, and we could certainly test them better under combat conditions.”<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the State Department contemplated the political difficulties with its allies if using these weapons was not effective. There was also the possibility that the USSR might retaliate in kind. However, General Bradley argued, from the view of the military, that “the potential casualties involved in any stepped-up ground action justified the use of every type of weapon.”<sup>35</sup> The Eisenhower administration examined the possibility of using the Nationalist Chinese forces to attack the Chinese mainland. This step was hailed by Republicans. Senator Knowland described the decision as a psychological campaign intended to keep the Communists guessing about America’s future plans. To encourage Eisenhower to take a tougher position, Republican Senators and Representatives called for a full naval blockade of the China coast as a device to press the Communists to agree to an armistice. Besides, Dulles informed Peking through India that unless they agreed to an armistice, the U.S. would strike at their Manchurian bases.<sup>36</sup> These steps produced an immediate result. On 4 February 1953,

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<sup>34</sup> NA, S/S-NSC files, lot 66 D 95, NSC Action No. 726-c. An ad hoc committee of civilian consultants was established on 25 February 1953 to study and advise the NSC on basic national security policies and programmes in relation to their costs.

<sup>35</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, pp. 817-818, Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Dept. of State-JCS Meeting, 27 March 1953. An ad hoc committee of civilian consultants was established on 25 February 1953 to study and advise the NSC on basic national security policies and programmes in relation to their costs.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Lyon, Eisenhower: Portrait of the Hero (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1974), pp. 518-520.



Chou En-lai requested the United States to return to the armistice negotiations that had been suspended since December 1952.

Acting on his own initiative, General Clark broke the impasse by calling for the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners in a letter to the Communists on 22 February 1953. On March 28, two days after Chou En-lai's return from Stalin's funeral, the Communists agreed to this proposal and to the resumption of the armistice negotiations which had been stalled since October 1952.<sup>37</sup> On 8 April, North Korea freed the civilian internees, who returned to the West via Moscow.<sup>38</sup> On 10 April, the Liaison Groups agreed on the ground rules for the exchange, dubbed 'Little Big Switch', which started on 19 April.<sup>39</sup> The necessity for an early armistice and the commitment to a political rather than a military solution to the Korean hostilities were basic to the US position. Yet, despite the successful conduct of Little Big Switch, the continuing deadlock over the question of non-forcible repatriation remained. Dulles focused on attempting to hinder the terms of the armistice already agreed. He questioned, in view of the changed situation and the possible desire of the Communists for an armistice, "whether the United States should feel bound by the other provisions in the armistice to which we had already agreed earlier." He worried about the possibility of a permanence of the armistice unless one side or the other deliberately broke it. He thought this situation would enable the Communists to refuse to advance to any satisfactory political settlement in Korea. On the contrary, Eisenhower, much more cautious in his response,

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<sup>37</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 818-819, Clark, The Commander in Chief, UNC to the JCS, 28 March 1953.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony Eden, Full Circle (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960) pp. 24-26.

<sup>39</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 919, Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State For Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson) to the Secretary of State, 'Recent Development in Korea', 20 April 1953.

asserted that “it would be impossible to call off the armistice now and to go to war again in Korea. The American people would never stand for such a move.” Nevertheless, Dulles argued that the U.S. should push for a new agreement to reflect the United States’ interests due to America’s better position in negotiations.<sup>40</sup>

Normal negotiations were resumed at Panmunjom on 26 April after a gap of more than six months. The Communist proposal for the remaining prisoners of war who were not directly repatriated was based upon the prerequisite of sending them to a neutral state. This was met with strong opposition from the United Nations Command, who insisted upon keeping the prisoners who were not directly repatriated. Significant progress in this phase of the negotiations was made by the Communists. They changed their position and suggested a revised eight-point proposal on 7 May, the most important components of which were that “The remaining POWs not directly repatriated be kept in their original places of detention and be handed over to Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) which should arrange for their repatriation.” In addition the period of persuasion was to last no more than four months, instead of six months. General Nam Il, the North Korean Representative, also suggested that the fate of the remaining prisoners after this period should be decided at the political conference on Korea as already provided for in Article 4 of the armistice agreement.<sup>41</sup> This proposal was fundamental because, for the first time, the Communists discarded their strict adherence to the clause of the Geneva Convention—the automatic repatriation of all POWs at the end of war. The Eisenhower administration realised that the new Communist proposal represented a significant shift in their position and appeared to

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<sup>40</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 139<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 8 April 1953.



offer a basis for negotiation of an acceptable agreement.<sup>42</sup> By mid-May, as a result of the earlier UN General Assembly resolution, discussion shifted to their retention in Korea under the custody of a five nation commission headed by India. For the United States, the idea of neutral nations arranging the repatriation was appealing. The candidate countries included Sweden, Switzerland, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The other nation not being decided might be India, should Communist China and North Korea consent. The Eisenhower administration disliked, however, the prospect that the Indians on the commission might vote against the U.S., since the Indian position on POWs had to some degree been close to the Communist position. More than anything else, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were reluctant to allow Communists troops from Poland and Czechoslovakia to be deployed in the rear of the UNC troops to supervise the POWs. In considering these questions, Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, concluded:

On the question of further instructions for Clark we have given our secretary a memorandum which in sum makes three points—first that we should accept the Indians right away as a member of the commission, second that we should propose that all forces be provided by the Indians alone, and third that we should stand on having a terminal date after which POWs would be released.<sup>43</sup>

Most controversially, on 13 May 1953, the U.S. negotiators were instructed, at Clark's suggestion and with the authority of the JCS, that Korean non-repatriates should not be handed over to the repatriation commission under any circumstances. Instead

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<sup>41</sup> NA, RG 59, Matthews files, lot 53 D 413, Clark to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 7 May 1953.

<sup>42</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, p. 981-982, The Chief of Staff, United States Army (Collins) to Clark, 7 May 1953.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 983-985, Memorandum of the Substance of Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 8 May 1953.



they should be released as soon as the armistice agreement was initialled. This decision was related to Rhee and his government. Since April Rhee had informed Clark of his opposition to the resumption of armistice negotiations and warned that he would seriously consider the withdrawal of South Korean forces from UN operational control in order to take unilateral military actions. Not surprisingly, the Communists' response to the above proposal was severe.<sup>44</sup> The demands were rejected outright by the Communists. They thought this would paralyze the work of the NNRC. Chou informed Nehru of China's plan to withdraw all the concessions they had recently presented. Western allies criticised the American position. On 18 May, Ward P. Allen of the European desk in the State Department summarised their concerns. Great Britain suggested that they should not go so far as to let Syngman Rhee's attitude be decisive. In view of this situation, Walter S. Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, pointed out that the Communists would capitalise on the differences between the United States and its allies. Robert Murphy, Political Advisor to Clark, noted this criticism and recommended that Clark be flexible on the question of North Korean POWs. In late May, Clark requested and the JCS agreed that Clark should terminate rather than recess the armistice negotiations if common ground could not be found.<sup>45</sup>

The real problems for the United States were with Rhee who sought to wreck the armistice. President Rhee was strongly against, and was fomenting public opposition in

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1010, Clark to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 12 May 1953; Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front, pp. 425-426; Rosemary Foot, A Substitute for Victory (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 170.

<sup>45</sup> DDE Library, Mark W. Clark Papers, Summary of Armistice Negotiations, 16 May 1953; NA, RG 59, lot 61 D 417, State-JCS Meetings, 18 May 1953; 695.0024/5-1953, Murphy to Johnson, 19 May 1953; Rosemary Foot, op.cit., p.172.



Korea to, any armistice along the proposed lines. He maintained that North Koreans resisting repatriation be released immediately upon an armistice, rather than turned over to the custodial commission for processing in the same manner as Chinese POWs. He believed that South Korea would not be safe until all Chinese troops had departed the Korean Peninsula. He persisted, accordingly, in demanding the withdrawal of Chinese troops before the armistice agreement was signed.<sup>46</sup> Rhee abhorred the idea of an armistice, fearing that it would guarantee a permanent Chinese presence in northern Korea that would result in the absorption of all Korea into China. Even though President Rhee realised the hopelessness of opposing any United States decision to sign an armistice, he still undertook to extract critical concessions from the United States—a mutual defence treaty, military and economic support, the retention of U.S. air and naval forces in South Korea, and simultaneous withdrawal of UN and Communist forces from Korea.

Clark discussed with Rhee the critical situation which had derived from South Korea's attitude towards the UNC counter-proposal pertaining to the presence of Communist custodial troops in Korean rear areas. Rhee was adamant that no foreign troops would be permitted on Korean soil. Clark advised Washington that Korean non-repatriates should be released since South Korea's position in this matter did not yield a single point. Clark was very concerned that Rhee had questioned the possibility of South Korean security troops in POW camps releasing North Koreans without consulting him.<sup>47</sup> Rhee threatened to release the Korean non-repatriates unilaterally, rather than hand them over to the NNRC (Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission).

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<sup>46</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, p. 897, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 April 1953.

Indeed he had the ability to carry out this threat. While the Chinese non-repatriates were in custody on Cheju Island, the Koreans were on the mainland. In the event of a unilateral release, the prisoners could instantly disappear into the local community. Rhee's reaction on the prisoner issue was the strong warning of what was to come.<sup>48</sup>

On 25 May, Clark presented the final position to the Communists. His main points were as follows:

1. Maintain present position on accepting five-nation custodial commission subject to all armed forces and operating personnel being provided exclusively by India.
2. Agree Korean non-repatriates will be turned over to commission in same manner as Chinese.
3. Agree that commission will act on all matters by majority vote.
4. Support essential elements in terms of reference for commission to assure coercion and force will not be used against non-repatriates.
5. Period of access to prisoners by North Koreans and Chinese to be ninety days.
6. Agree to submit to political conference the question of remaining non-repatriates, with provision that failing to determine their disposition within 120 days (90 days access by the Communists and 30 days for consideration by political conference), their case will be referred to UN General Assembly.<sup>49</sup>

Rhee's response to the proposal was completely uncooperative. He declared it unacceptable to South Korea.<sup>50</sup> Public opinion was also negative. Yung Tae Pyun, Korean Foreign Minister, criticised the U.S. for not consulting with South Korea before submitting the final proposal, and threatened to withdraw the ROK forces from United

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1008-1010, Clark to JCS, 12 May 1953.

<sup>48</sup> Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), pp. 249-250; Callum A. Macdonald, *Korea: The War before Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 186.

<sup>49</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, pp. 429-430.

<sup>50</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-2553, Briggs to the Department of State, 25 May 1953.



Nations Command control.<sup>51</sup> However, Rhee moderated his intransigent stand a few days later. It was thought that a tough position may have been temporarily taken to extract further concessions from Washington in the course of all South Korea's agitation against the U.S. proposal. In his letter to Eisenhower, his message was milder in tone and he had omitted any reference to the Korean POWs or to the five nation custodial commission.<sup>52</sup> It was indicative of the decision on his part to avoid plunging into reckless adventure. The Eisenhower administration planned that if the proposal was not accepted by the Communists within a week, negotiations would be terminated rather than recessed. All previous agreements would have to be voided as to the immunity and neutralisation of the negotiations area, and all POWs would also be released.<sup>53</sup> Dulles passed a strong warning to the Chinese through the Indian Government that "unless an armistice was agreed upon, the United States would intensify the war."<sup>54</sup> This action resulted from the 144<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Security Council, at which the policy-makers considered the use of atomic weapons for curtailment of war expenditure. Eisenhower stated that "it might be cheaper, dollar-wise, to use atomic weapons in Korea than to continue to use conventional weapons."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Dong-A Ilbo, Seoul, 29 May 1953.

<sup>52</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Letter to Eisenhower, 30 May 1953.

<sup>53</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1051, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, 18 May 1953.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 1068-1069, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, 21 May 1953; David Rees, Korea: The Limited War (London: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 416-420.

<sup>55</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 144<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 13 May 1953. At the meeting, participants were President Eisenhower, Secretary Dulles, Secretary of Defence, Acting Director for Mutual Security, Secretary of Treasury, Director of Bureau of Budget, Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission, Chairman of JCS, and Director of CIA.

His only real worry was over the possibility of intervention by the USSR. He feared the Chinese much less.<sup>56</sup>

At the meeting on 4 June, the Communists agreed to the main points of the UN Command proposal except that non-repatriates who might elect to go to neutral nations should be assisted by the NNRC and the Red Cross Society of India. Dulles told Eisenhower, "Barring unforeseen developments, it appears that the POW issue has been solved."<sup>57</sup> Clark predicted that an armistice could be signed as early as 18 June. On 8 June, a final text on POWs was agreed by both sides.<sup>58</sup> However, Rhee did not accept the agreement. Dulles met with senators to discuss current Korean questions and found them unhappy with the final agreement on POWs. Senator Knowland was requested to persuade Rhee not to obstruct an armistice.<sup>59</sup> As Rhee had been affected by public opinion and interest groups, congressmen's persuasions were quite critical at that period.

Once agreement was reached on the repatriation question, it was no longer a question of when the final armistice would be signed. It was now up to the United States to secure Rhee's accord in a POWs exchange and to carry through the extended obligations that an armistice agreement would impose. If hostilities had been concluded, another problem would have been raised: Rhee would be free to withdraw

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<sup>56</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 145<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 20 May 1953.

<sup>57</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Dulles to Eisenhower, 4 June 1953.

<sup>58</sup> Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front, pp. 430-431.; William H. Vatcher, Panmunjom: The Story of the Korean Military Armistice Negotiations (New York: Prager, 1958), p. 193.

<sup>59</sup> DDE Library, Dulles Papers, Subject Series: Korea, Box 9, 8 June 1953.



from the UN Command as leader of a sovereign state. This was recognised by Clark who informed the JCS of it in a telegram on 18 April:

The possibility that Rhee may make independent use of ROK forces raises again the question of obtaining an agreement with the Republic of Korea which provides for UNC control of ROK forces during the post-armistice period. Current UNC authority over ROK forces was granted by Rhee personally, and exists only during the period of the continuation of the present state of hostilities. In my view the present state of hostilities will not legally end with the execution of armistice but Rhee may interpret this argument differently.<sup>60</sup>

On 24 April, as armistice negotiations resumed, Rhee threatened to withdraw his troops from the UN Command. The UNC had been concerned about breaking off the armistice negotiations since the South Korean army held two-thirds of the defence line against the Communist forces, where combat was suspended while the truce negotiations were being carried on. This would present an ideal opportunity for Rhee to take unilateral military action, thereby rendering him a bargaining source.<sup>61</sup>

In April, the term of the postwar security relationship, which was clearly contingent upon South Korea's acceptance of the armistice agreement, was still unresolved. Nevertheless, the main issues were already clear, centring around the demand for a mutual defence treaty with the United States. The South Korean Foreign Minister Yung Tae Pyun raised the subject of a U.S.-ROK mutual defence treaty in a conversation with American Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs on 3 April. Secretary Dulles notified Pyun that the U.S. would consider a defence treaty after the Korean political

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<sup>60</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 918, Clark to JCS, 18 April 1953.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 940-942, Clark to Collins, 26 April 1953.

conference worked out a peaceful Korean settlement.<sup>62</sup> In a letter to Eisenhower on 14 April, Rhee reiterated his request for a security pact. On the same day, Major General Thomas W. Herren, Commander of the Korean Communications Zone, suggested to Clark that in view of the hostile campaign by Rhee against the armistice negotiations, the U.S. should accede to Rhee's request for a security pact between the two countries.<sup>63</sup> In his letter to Clark, Rhee did not feel prepared to agree to the armistice, unless a mutual defence treaty was concluded in advance of the withdrawal of the United States forces from Korea.<sup>64</sup> Clark recognised that the ROK withdrawal from the UN Command, growing out of dissatisfaction with an armistice agreement, was a real possibility and posed a threat to his power as UN Commander. The UN Command, which had originally served as the controlling mechanism through which the U.S. held operational authority over the Korean armed forces, broadened its role and functions as the war continued. It had served as the formal negotiating mechanism for UN forces in Korea since the armistice negotiations had started, and would likely be the key to political stability on the Korean peninsula in the post-war period.

On 12 May the South Korean government asked that the armistice negotiations be deferred since they were in conflict with the American position. As this was rejected, President Rhee ordered the withdrawal of South Korean delegates from Panmunjom. The Eisenhower Administration expressed serious concerns over Rhee's opposition to

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 897-900, Memo of Conversation, by Young, 8 April 1953.

<sup>63</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, p. 442.

<sup>64</sup> NA, RG 59, lot 53 D 413, Rhee to Clark, 30 April 1953. As a whole, immediately after armistice agreement would be signed, all foreign troops would be expected to withdraw from the Korean peninsula at that time. Rhee was concerned about the security from the U.S. in any event. A mutual defence treaty was an important means for the security of South Korea.



the armistice. Eisenhower appreciated that Rhee's actions had stemmed in part from a feeling of apprehension in South Korea regarding its future security, and also from his desire to maximise his bargaining position with Washington. To allay Rhee's apprehension, the Eisenhower administration offered to hold informal discussions with the ROK looking towards a comprehensive agreement on military assistance and related matters. In addition, they were prepared to assist the development and maintenance of Korean ground forces at a level of 20 divisions (plus one Marine Brigade), provided assurances were given by the ROK of cooperation in the armistice agreement.<sup>65</sup> General Bradley explained that cutbacks in the ammunition programme intended for NATO would be required in order to maintain the ROK forces.<sup>66</sup> However, Rhee did not regard the proposed statement as an effective substitute for a security pact. General Clark and Ambassador Briggs viewed the security pact as essential as a bargaining tool to soften the impact of concessions that the U.S. was about to make to the Communists at Panmunjom. They urged the Administration to express to Rhee a willingness to negotiate a mutual security pact.<sup>67</sup>

The question of entering into a mutual defence treaty with South Korea was enthusiastically debated and discussed by policy makers in the State and Defense departments. Most of the participants opposed it. Secretary Dulles was against it on the grounds that "it would be contrary to the principle of the UN action in Korea." A mutual defence treaty would clearly weaken the UN mandate and impair the validity of

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<sup>65</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-1853, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, 15 May 1953

<sup>66</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 145<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 20 May 1953.

<sup>67</sup> FRUS, Vol. 15, p. 1048, Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State to the President, 18 May 1953; Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front, pp. 446-447.



that mandate. The Truman administration avoided seeking Congressional authorisation for the Korean involvement which might undermine the UN character of the Korean commitment. For this reason, Dulles observed that under the circumstances, it might lead the other allies to reduce their military presence from Korea, and instead opt for a policy of imposing 'the Greater Sanctions' [see below]. Washington policy makers were concerned that it would lead the Communists to believe that the United States was not interested in the political unification of all Korea under a free government, and that it might acknowledge and give legal effect to communist control over a part of Korea. General Collins argued, from the military aspect, that "if we left forces in Korea for a security pact, we would be leaving forces in a place where in the event of global war we might not want to fight, so from a military point of view there were real disadvantages to a security pact with the Koreans."<sup>68</sup> In connection with this, a month later, Dulles revealed his apprehensions over a security pact that would bind the United States to unify Korea by force if the political conference following the armistice agreement was not successful.<sup>69</sup>

As Rhee's opposition to an armistice was impeding the negotiating process, the Eisenhower administration believed that South Korea's continued objection to an

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<sup>68</sup> NA, lot 61 D 417, Korean Negotiations, State-JCS Meeting, 18 May 1953; NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-1853, 22 May 1953. The agreement of all the UN nations participating in the hostilities in Korea to the issuance of the joint 'greater sanctions' declaration mentioned in paragraph 2-a-(5) of NSC 118/2 was obtained. This statement was to the effect that if the Communists broke an armistice in Korea and the aggression in Korea was renewed, the consequences would be so great that, in all probability, it would not be possible to confine hostilities within the frontiers of Korea. The full text of this statement and procedures for its immediate issuance following an armistice had been agreed to.

<sup>69</sup> DDE Library, Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversation with Bullitt, 30 June 1953.



armistice agreement would necessitate some form of positive response by the United States. At a high level-meeting held on 29-30 May, alternative courses of action were considered for the purpose of counteracting the continued ROK hostility to an armistice agreement. The policy options upon which they rested were fundamental to understanding the new terms of the United States' national security commitment to South Korea. Three options were considered by policy makers. The first was the question of proposing a security pact, the second was the question of authority for taking over the South Korean government--'Plan Everready', and the third was the question of pulling the United States forces out of Korea.

Each of these actions would have significant consequences for future U.S.-ROK security relations. The first approach was to gain Rhee's compliance with the armistice in return for a security pact. While this would be ambiguous the UN character of the original military commitment, the ideological incompatibility between a policy based on a UN mandate and one based on a unilateral security commitment, was no longer viewed as overriding. The second was a military coup led by the U.S. against President Rhee and his government. It was prepared by General Clark on 4 May as a contingency plan to be implemented in the event of continued intransigence by the ROK toward the armistice agreement. General Collins preferred to take Rhee into custody. He wanted to proclaim martial law, enforced by ROK Army authorities who were loyal to the Commanding General of the U.S. Eighth Army, and establish a military government. He thought that otherwise, Rhee might do various things to embarrass or endanger the United States: release North Korean non-repatriates; offer a separate armistice; withdraw ROK forces from the UN Command; or stimulate riots or attacks on the foreign personnel working for the NNSC under the armistice terms. From a political



point of view, however, Assistant Secretary of State Walter S. Robertson was apprehensive about the possibility of putting the United States in a position where they were aggressors. The third option was regarded by the military as having serious political implications if the United States gave up South Korea after having fought for three years to protect it. Among these options, the first was the agreed national policy, although the feasibility of this course of action remained to be tested. The unknown factor was whether Rhee was prepared to pay the price for a mutual defence treaty in compliance with the armistice agreement and continued UN Command operational control over ROK forces during the post-armistice period. On the whole, most of the participants concluded that the decision would have to be made by Eisenhower who had final responsibility for the policy of the United States.<sup>70</sup>

In anticipation of drastic measures, a special message was sent to Clark, which withheld authorisation to proceed with Plan Everready, but did not specifically rule out any extreme course of action in an emergency.<sup>71</sup> On 30 May, Eisenhower agreed to inform Rhee that the U.S. was prepared to undertake immediate negotiations for a security pact with South Korea along the lines of the Philippine and ANZUS (Australia,

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<sup>70</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp.1114-1119, State-JCS Meetings, 29 May 1953; Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 447.

The participants at the meeting included a broad cross-section of senior policy makers including General Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, General Eddleman, Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans, Admiral Lalor, Secretary of the JCS, H. Freeman Mathews, Under Secretary of State, Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Frank Nash, Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs, and Everett Gleason, Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council.

<sup>71</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1123-24, JCS to Clark, 30 May 1953.



New Zealand and the United States) treaties.<sup>72</sup> President Rhee's response to this was vague. Ambassador Briggs doubted if Rhee would be reconciled to an armistice by the offer to negotiate a mutual defence treaty. He thought it was an untimely offer as it was followed on May 25 by the UNC proposal without previous consultation with the ROK.<sup>73</sup> As a result, the whole situation was greatly changed. For the most part, Rhee regarded the offer as a bargaining approach, encouraging him to renew his insistence on modifying the armistice proposal.

The diplomatic seesaw during the months of June and July 1953 focused upon another stalemate. The task that the Eisenhower administration had to cope with was greatly complicated by Rhee's requirements for binding agreements from the United States prior to an armistice agreement. These were based upon a complete withdrawal of Chinese Communist and United Nations forces, not on the basis of an armistice along the lines of the 25 May proposal. This left a wide gap between Rhee and Eisenhower.<sup>74</sup> In a message from Collins on 3 June, Clark was told that as far as the United States was concerned, the introduction of the simultaneous withdrawal of foreign forces into the armistice negotiations was unacceptable. It was regarded as a sign of weakness and something that might jeopardise the American position in negotiations with the Communists. In connection with Rhee's proposal, Washington considered that firstly, there should be no commitment to withdraw all UN forces until the ROK and the UNC were satisfied regarding the security of South Korea; secondly, the actual presence of UNC forces in Korea was an additional deterrent against renewal

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<sup>72</sup> NA, FE files, lot 55 D 338, South Korean Attitude Toward Armistice, 30 May 1953.

<sup>73</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.5/5-3053, Briggs to Dulles, 30 May 1953.

<sup>74</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Rhee to Eisenhower, 30 May 1953.

of attack; and finally, the continued presence of UNC forces during the forthcoming political conference would improve the bargaining position of the ROK and UN delegations at the conference.<sup>75</sup> Most important was that any UN forces' withdrawal from Korea could render difficult the basic U.S. policy objective of retaining operational control over ROK forces.

General Clark and Ambassador Briggs were authorised to discuss the terms of a security pact with Rhee, though they refrained from doing so whilst President Rhee continued his insistence on the simultaneous withdrawal of foreign forces. In<sup>a</sup> meeting with President Rhee to deliver Eisenhower's letter containing an offer of a mutual defence treaty, Ambassador Briggs and Clark pointed out to Rhee that negotiations over a treaty could begin as soon as an armistice had been signed and accepted by South Korea, and tried to persuade him to take a reasonable approach to the armistice terms. However, their efforts were crushed and they were warned that if the United States signed an armistice, "South Korea would take action."<sup>76</sup> Clark and Murphy suspected at some point that the ROK might seek to engineer the release of North Korean non-repatriates.<sup>77</sup> Clark warned Rhee that this action would result in his own destruction and that of South Korea without American logistical support. Despite this bluff, in reality Clark was genuinely concerned about Rhee's ability to violate the armistice

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<sup>75</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp.1135-1137, Collins to Clark, 3 June 1953.

<sup>76</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series Box 37, Eisenhower to Rhee, 6 June 1953; FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1148-1149, Briggs to State Department, 7 June 1953.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 1138, Memorandum by Secretary of State to the President, 4 June 1953.



terms. He conjectured that Rhee could do this by any one of a number of methods, and there was little the UNC could do to stop him.<sup>78</sup>

Although negotiations on the remaining armistice items began on 9 June, President Rhee kept up his uncooperative and rude attitude towards the Eisenhower administration. Clark and Briggs' lack of success in persuading Rhee induced Washington's demand to moderate his stance against the armistice agreement. Dulles sent Rhee a letter on 11 June 1953 inviting him to a confidential meeting in Washington. He reminded Rhee of President Eisenhower's determination to unify Korea by peaceful means. Rhee replied he could not leave his country even for a short time, adding that "I wonder if you could make a trip here so that we may talk things over face to face."<sup>79</sup> In reaction to this letter, Dulles felt, on balance, that it would be a mistake for him to go to Korea before Rhee's position on the armistice had been made clear. He responded that he could not leave Washington at this time, but suggested that Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State, could go to Korea instead. Robertson was asked to go prior to the Bermuda Conference, as Rhee could be anxious about Churchill's influence on the Eisenhower administration with regard to the British will that the U.S. government take a more lenient attitude towards Communist China.<sup>80</sup> Robertson's trip to Korea floundered on Rhee's bluffing tactics. Rhee was not placated. The situation in this period posed a dilemma for Washington and Seoul. If Rhee once accepted the armistice agreement, he would be disgraced before his people. Washington

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1149-1151, Clark to JCS, 7 June 1953.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1167, Rhee to Dulles, 14 June 1953.

<sup>80</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, box 1, Memorandum for the President, 14 June 1953.

realised these situations were crucial for Rhee and his government. For this reason, Robertson would have to concoct a face-saving formula.

While the United Nations Command and the Communists were preparing the final details of the POW exchange, Rhee, in an attempt to blow up the negotiations, ordered a secret programme to release North Korean POWs who did not want to be repatriated. In the early morning of 18 June 1953, under the auspices of Korean guards, the prisoners at camp in Pusan, Masan, and other places inland were released into the local population. General Clark noted that “all hell broke loose at Rhee’s order.”<sup>81</sup> This incident brought into question the basic issue of whether the UN Command still exercised operational control over ROK forces. On learning of the prisoners’ escape, the Communist negotiators abruptly suspended the negotiations. President Rhee dealt a smashing blow to the armistice process by ordering the escape. In his letter to General Clark on 18 June, he threatened to do still more damage by withdrawing South Korean forces from the United Nations Command and by refusing to abide by the armistice terms. One of the provisions of the armistice agreement was to be that within two hours of its implementation all forces would withdraw two kilometers from the demarcation lines. Rhee warned that he would ignore that provision. He threatened to maintain South Korean forces in place as a means of obstructing the creation of a demilitarised zone, which was the striking blow to the armistice agreement.<sup>82</sup> All told, 35,400 prisoners managed to escape by 30 June; only 8,600 remained in the camps. Failure to

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<sup>81</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1196, Memorandum of Conversation by the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (Young), 17 June 1953.

<sup>82</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 150<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, President Rhee’s Release of Prisoners of War, 18 June 1953.



take steps to prevent Rhee's expected action called out criticism from the Communists as well as Western allies and America itself. The Eisenhower administration again asked senators and representatives who had an effect on Rhee to bring him into line.<sup>83</sup> There was a question <sup>as to</sup> ~~whether~~ Eisenhower intended to direct Clark to carry out Everready. According to Sherman Adams, Assistant to President Eisenhower, Eisenhower told the cabinet members on the next day that "he wished the South Koreans would overthrow Rhee and replace him with a more moderate and reasonable leader." He had no choice but to realise Rhee's position not only because Rhee had stable political power, but also because Eisenhower did not want a surrender to the Chinese by walking out of Korea.<sup>84</sup>

As a result of Rhee's release of the POWs, the armistice negotiations immediately went into recess until the Eisenhower administration regained control over Rhee and his adherence to the armistice. Washington's proposal for a mutual defence treaty had not been a satisfactory stimulus to gain Rhee's compliance. Accordingly, the Eisenhower administration considered various actions to meet the situation Rhee had created. America's alternatives included trying to bring him into line with its current armistice position or, if he was adamant, trying to effect his removal by Plan Everready. The only other alternative was for the United States to yield to Rhee.<sup>85</sup> Although President Rhee's actions highlighted his ability to defy his great ally in the interest of emphasising his country's need to pursue an independent policy, this was a dangerous policy. It could produce more concessions from the U.S., but it could also backfire on him.

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<sup>83</sup> DDE Library, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, 25 June 1953.

<sup>84</sup> Sherman Adams, Firsthand Report: The Story of <sup>the</sup> Eisenhower Administration (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 100-101.

<sup>85</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1225-1227, Briggs to Clark, 20 June 1953.

Washington applied more pressure in an effort to bring Rhee into line. In a letter to Rhee on 22 June, Dulles admonished Rhee that he had no right to release the prisoners or to withdraw from the UNC, affirming that those actions carried the risk of national disaster for South Korea.<sup>86</sup>

Unexpectedly, the Communists' reaction was surprisingly restrained. After a short recession, they agreed to resume the negotiations, but criticised strongly what they suspected was the implicit approval of the United Nations Command of the POWs' release. The POW issue had been the main obstacle in the way of an armistice agreement. The Communists were also just as worried as the United States about whether Rhee would obey the terms of an armistice agreement. The Communists asked if the Eisenhower administration could control President Rhee effectively, and if not, was Rhee bound by the armistice agreement? The UNC did not give a clear answer.<sup>87</sup>

There was a long and difficult time to bring Rhee into line with the U.S. To prevent Rhee taking anymore drastic action, General Clark warned Rhee that the ROK army lacked the resources to fight on alone and advised that "a post-armistice political conference was a good idea" for Korean unification. Rhee was told that the POWs could be delivered to the Repatriation Commission at the demilitarised zone, thus avoiding the need for Indian troops in Korea. Clark thought that Rhee was impressed with this alternative, but he would not commit himself.<sup>88</sup> President Rhee tried to be conciliatory. His feelings were set out in a draft aide-memoire he sent to Clark on 23 June 1953. He agreed to support the armistice agreement, and to carry out its terms, but

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1238-40, Dulles to Rhee, 22 June 1953.

<sup>87</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent*, pp. 451-453.



only because ROK forces were under the United Nations Command and had to obey its orders, not because the armistice terms had been accepted by the ROK government. He also agreed not to withdraw his armed forces from the United Nations Command unilaterally, and not to sign the armistice as a member of the United Nations delegation. But he attached the following additional conditions:

1. The political conference must sit no longer than 90 days. If this period expires without agreeing upon the means of evacuating Chinese Communist troops from Korea, to be completed within 60 days of the conference breaking up, the ROK forces will invade the north to unify Korea with the support of the United States.
2. Before signing the armistice, the United States will enter into a mutual defence treaty with South Korea.
3. The United States will provide South Korea with adequate military and economic aid.
4. As to the prisoners of war, no foreign troops and Communists indoctrinators are allowed in South Korea. Communists Chinese prisoners will be disposed of as the UN plan. Anti-Communist North Korean POWs should be quickly questioned and released.<sup>89</sup>

Conditions 1 and 2 represented obvious difficulties for the Eisenhower administration. Apart from stipulating a discretionary time limit on the political conference, Rhee's desire to commit the United States to military involvement conflicted with Eisenhower's policy of peaceful unification. Whether there was any bite to Washington's desire for peaceful reunification remained an important question. On 12 June, Secretary Dulles stressed, in a letter to Rhee: "When we talk about unification of

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<sup>88</sup> Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), pp. 282-284.

<sup>89</sup> DDE Library, Mark Clark Papers, Rhee Aide Memoire, 22 June 1953; FRUS, Vol. 15, pp. 1240-1242, Clark to JCS, 23 June 1953.

Korea by methods other than war, we are not using empty phrases.”<sup>90</sup> A second problem related to the question of whether a security pact would precede or follow an armistice agreement. As such a treaty would have to be submitted to the Senate for approval, Washington policy makers assumed that a rigid time limit, therefore, could not be imposed by Rhee’s Government.

Giving the green light for a quick armistice agreement, President Eisenhower determined that General Clark should be given overall authority to conclude an armistice agreement with the Communists without Rhee’s approval if necessary. On 25 June 1953 Clark received a joint State-Defense message that included the following guidelines: there should be no forced repatriation of POWs; Rhee should be informed of U.S. intentions to proceed with the conclusion of an armistice; no commitment, or agreement should be made which would require total UNC withdrawal from Korea; however, this should not prevent the U.S. from taking any action which might caution the ROK leaders with regard to the consequences of non-compliance. In response, Clark advised Washington: “the sooner we sign an armistice, with or without Rhee’s support, the better our position will be to handle Rhee when we are not worried about a Communist attack.”<sup>91</sup>

Following the directions of Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles, Robertson went to South Korea to obtain an agreement from Rhee that he would not obstruct the armistice. At the meetings with Rhee, he was subjected to severe criticisms over the U.S. attitude to the Communists. Rhee reiterated his opposition to the armistice terms in connection with the further detention of POWs, since they contained no mention of a Chinese

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<sup>90</sup> DDE Library, Mark Clark Papers, Rhee Aide Memoire, 22 June 1953.



Communist withdrawal nor of the prospective political conference. Nevertheless, Robertson succeeded in drawing Rhee's attention to the need for U.S.-South Korean cooperation in a private meeting. Rhee finally indicated his acceptance of the armistice agreement with the following modifications:

1. Moving remaining 8600 Korean anti-Communist POWs to demilitarised zone for take-over by NNSC, allowing Chinese POWs to remain in Cheju island under NNRC as now contemplated;
2. Placing time limit of say 90 days on political conference discussions. I stated I thought this impossible condition but would present it to you;
3. Economic aid and build-up of ROK Army to approximately 20 divisions as previously promised;
4. Immediate guarantee of mutual defence pact which I indicated would follow general lines of pact with Philippines.<sup>92</sup>

Robertson's private meeting substantiated Rhee's willingness to bargain for the best deal with the United States. President Eisenhower and Dulles agreed that it was encouraging, and agreed with points three and four although any guarantee of a mutual defence treaty was, of course, subject to Senate advice and consent in accordance with U.S. constitutional processes. With respect to point two, Eisenhower maintained that it was impossible for the United States to impose a time limit upon other countries which would be participating in the political conference, and promised that if the conference was not making progress, he would act in concert with the ROK by retiring from the conference.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1271-1272, JCS to Clark, 25 June 1953; ibid., no. 3, Clark to JCS, 26 June 1953.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp. 1276-1277, Robertson to the Department of State, 26 June 1953.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 1277-1278, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, 26 June 1953.

In consideration of the ROK's domestic situation, Rhee's aggressive and unequivocal attitude to the armistice agreement made it extremely difficult for him to change his objection to the agreement. In his report to Dulles, Robertson noted Rhee's dilemma, mentioned to him after a gigantic war anniversary rally, "You are like a hand extended to a drowning man, please help us find a way out." Robertson was convinced that Rhee had tried to find an appropriate exit which would save his face and at the same time make reversal of his position seem logical to his people. He needed to convince the South Koreans that he had forced concessions from Washington.<sup>94</sup>

On 27 June, Robertson and Clark met with Rhee and delivered Eisenhower's reply to the four questions raised by Rhee in his first meeting with Robertson. After the presentation, Rhee reacted negatively and insisted that it did not fully reflect his own ideas. On 28 June, Rhee conveyed his aide-memoire to Robertson. He argued that on three points his wishes had not been met by Washington. In connection with a mutual defence treaty, Rhee re-emphasised South Korea's wishes to conclude such a pact prior to the signing of an armistice. With regards to this, he ignored the constitutional position of the Senate in defining the future U.S. security commitment towards South Korea. Secondly, he continued to insist on the immediate release of non-repatriate POWs who had undergone interrogation. Lastly he maintained that a combat operation should be resumed to expel Chinese troops from North Korea if the Korean political conference did not make any progress for the unification of Korea.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-2753, Robertson to Dulles and Johnson, 27 June 1953.

<sup>95</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series Box 1, Aide-Memoire from the President of the Republic of Korea, 28 June 1953.



Rhee intended to intimidate the United States to succumb to his demands. He emphasised that the ROK agreed to continue the present arrangement with the United Nations Command as stated in his letter to General MacArthur dated 15 July 1950, if the UNC cooperated and supported South Korea's policy by fighting on to victory.<sup>96</sup> Rhee stated, however, that when his government decided to take its forces out of the UNC, he would notify the UNC in advance.<sup>97</sup>

On receiving this bad news, Secretary Dulles informed Eisenhower and concluded that Clark and Robertson should be given discretionary powers to increase pressure on Rhee.<sup>98</sup> On 29 June, another meeting was held and Robertson handed Rhee the original of the Korean aide-memoire with the remark that "as it contained so many inaccuracies and so much of it was irrelevant, it could not provide a basis for discussion and therefore was returned as unacceptable."<sup>99</sup> Since the United States could no longer delay answering the question the Communists had proposed on 4 June, Clark informed Rhee that the UNC was proceeding with armistice negotiations, and expressed hope for South Korea's support and cooperation. Finally, Rhee agreed to submit a revised version of his last aide-memoire.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Department of State, Bulletin, p. 206, UN document S/1627, 7 August 1950. President Rhee had assigned operational command of The ROK ground, sea, and air forces to MacArthur as CINCUNC in a letter of 15 July 1950.

<sup>97</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1282-1284, Rhee to Robertson, 28 June 1953.

<sup>98</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Korea, 28 June 1953.

<sup>99</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-2953, DTG 290645Z, Robertson to the Department of State, 29 June 1953.

<sup>100</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1292-1294, Rhee to Robertson, 1 July 1953.

The United States believed that President Rhee would keep on persisting in his opposition to the armistice agreement to obtain concessions from it. Robertson reported to Dulles that Rhee was genuinely concerned that “the Communists might win more at the negotiations than they had won in military action.” In an effort to bring Rhee into line with the United States, Senior Republican and Democrat politicians, Senators William Knowland and Alexander Smith, and Congressman Walter Judd (all three of whom were bitterly anti-Communist and friends of Rhee), expressed their assurance over Rhee’s cooperation with the U.S. by signing an armistice agreement.<sup>101</sup> Expecting to deliver to Rhee the administration’s concern about Rhee’s uncooperative attitude, Acting Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith sent a message to Robertson that Senator Walter F. George and other influential senators on whom the Eisenhower administration depended strongly for support for any programme for Korea had a growing lack of confidence in Rhee.<sup>102</sup> This action meant that the ratification of the mutual defence treaty would be dependent on what Rhee did between then and the time of Senate consideration of the treaty.

Rhee, who was a shrewd negotiator himself, tried to take the initiative to raise two principal issues: American’s action in <sup>the</sup> post-Korean political conference period, and ~~the~~ Senate’s treatment of a mutual defence treaty. Rhee repeated again his strong desire for a pledge from the United States for joint military action in the post-conference period. Rhee fully understood the difference between the United States carrying on the war as a member of the United Nations or acting alone. Considering Washington’s dilemma, he

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<sup>101</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/7-153, Telegram to Seoul, 1 July 1953.

<sup>102</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/7-553, 5 July 1953; FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1331-1332, The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, 5 July 1953.



expressed his hope that the United States could at least give him moral and material support in fighting alone for Korea's unification. He also recognised why American statesmen were reluctant to give such support if it meant a risk of large-scale hostilities. Rhee doubted whether the Senate would approve a mutual defence treaty because of the constitutional limitations upon the President's actions. He had a thorough knowledge of American history and knew of instances when the Senate had not always ratified treaties negotiated by a President. He realised that he had lost popular support in America and for this reason he felt there might be some doubt that the Senate would give its consent for a defence treaty with Korea. In reference to this, Rhee demanded from Eisenhower and Dulles assurances that the Senate leaders would act speedily on the treaty. Robertson replied that the Senate leaders were aware of Eisenhower's offer of a treaty and indicated their general approval.<sup>103</sup> Mr. Yung Taë Pyun, the Korean Foreign Minister, protested his concern over a lack of any concrete assurances against renewed Communist aggression.<sup>104</sup> In order not to delay the signing of the armistice agreement, Robertson urged Dulles that "Eisenhower confer with the Senate leaders of both parties to obtain the promise of their support for the treaty," and advised Rhee to this effect.<sup>105</sup>

As to the resumption of hostilities after the Korean political conference, President Eisenhower's flexibility was limited by his presidential campaign promise to bring the United States forces home and by his dependence on Congress. Robertson set forth the limits of Eisenhower's foreign policy vis-à-vis South Korea. He conveyed to Dulles his

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1326-1329, Memorandum of Conversation, By Robertson, 4 July 1953.

<sup>104</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/7-453, Meeting with President Rhee, 4 July 1953.

<sup>105</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 15, p. 1336, Robertson to Dulles, 6 July 1953.

distress over Rhee's threat to resume hostilities alone after a joint withdrawal from the political conference as Rhee would never agree to place his forces under the United Nations Command for an indefinite time.<sup>106</sup>

In his revised aide-memoire, handed to Robertson on 7 July, Rhee agreed that Senate's enactment of the treaty was not possible before the armistice.<sup>107</sup> Rhee harboured a deep fear during that period that not only would the armistice leave Korea divided, but that in the future Korea might be sacrificed to some great power as had happened in 1950. The United States' role in that event was not one to give him comfort.

Rhee defined his final position on 9 July. His letter indicated retreat from many of his previously declared terms:

1. He gave up the condition that the withdrawal of Chinese Communists troops and unification of Korea took place prior to the conclusion of armistice.
2. He gave up the demand that all non-Communists POWs be immediately released to countries of their own choosing.
3. He agreed that all anti-Communist POWs would be transported to DMZ and turned over to NNSC.
4. He gave up his refusal to submit unification of Korea to political conference, and agreed to cooperate in the peaceful achievement of Korean unification with certain reservations.
5. He gave up the demand that a defence treaty be ratified prior to the conclusion of armistice.
6. He abandoned his request that America resume hostilities after the failure of the political conference.

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1330-1331, Robertson to Dulles, 5 July 1953.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1350, Robertson to Dulles, 8 July 1953.



7. For the first time in writing he formally agreed not to obstruct the armistice.<sup>108</sup>

President Rhee's conciliatory attitude was not entirely satisfactory to the United States because he pointed out that the ROK could not sign the armistice. This would be another exit for Rhee to raise a bargaining method afterward. However, Washington responded favourably to it. Secretary Dulles thought it an acceptable basis for proceeding to negotiate an armistice agreement.<sup>109</sup> The reason Rhee retreated from his previously acclaimed terms was thought to be his consideration that South Korean forces could need time for replacement or reorganisation, and that a unilateral decision might be possible, since he was confident that the Korean political conference could not achieve any satisfactory outcomes.<sup>110</sup>

Rhee and Robertson concluded their talks on July 11 and issued a joint communiqué predicting continued cooperation during the post-armistice period. In a letter to Eisenhower, Rhee guaranteed that he would not obstruct, in any manner, the implementation of the terms of an armistice agreement.<sup>111</sup> Although progress had been made, scepticism remained because Rhee was quoted as saying, "we will not accept armistice, but we agree not to obstruct it for a period of three months."<sup>112</sup>

Rhee's readiness to violate an armistice agreement was a critical question for the Communists as well. The plenary sessions at Panmunjom reconvened on 10 July. General Nam Il, North Korean Delegate, protested at Rhee's release of POWs and

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<sup>108</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/7-953, Robertson to Alexis Johnson, 10 July 1953.

<sup>109</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1362, The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea, 9 July 1953.

<sup>110</sup> Park Sil, Han Kook Woe Kyo Bi Sa [A Disclosed History of Korean Diplomacy] (Seoul: Hankook Ilbo, 1979), p. 249.

<sup>111</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series Box 37, Rhee to Eisenhower, 11 July 1953.

asked for an assurance that he would not do something similar again.<sup>113</sup> He dismissed General William Harrison's assurances on 11 July, based on instructions from the JCS that the UNC would not support any aggressive action by South Korean Army units in violation of the armistice.<sup>114</sup> Debate on this issue continued for a few days. The next day meeting at Panmunjom Harrison assured the Communists that he had received suitable assurance from Rhee's Government that it would work in close collaboration for common objectives during the post hostility period. The Communists welcomed this breakthrough but pointed out that definite pledges would still be required.<sup>115</sup> In confronting the Communist press for further clarification of the specific answers, and about their attack on the South Korean Capitol Division and three other divisions beginning on the night of 13 July, Harrison suspected the Communists were delaying the negotiations. On 16 July, negotiations were temporarily recessed though Harrison reiterated assurances from South Korea.<sup>116</sup> Clark thought that, under the present condition, if the UNC took a firm and positive stand it might influence the Communists to conclude an armistice agreement. He was concerned about additional UN casualties and giving Rhee another opportunity to obstruct the armistice.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Washington Post, 11 July 1953.

<sup>113</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1364-1365, Editorial Note; Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 480-481.

<sup>114</sup> NA, RG 59, Korean Situation File, lot 53 D 413, Telegram C 63608, 11 July 1953.

<sup>115</sup> NA, RG 59, lot 53 D 413, Telegram CX 63640 and CX 63643, 12 July 1953; Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 481-482.

<sup>116</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1378-1380, Clark to JCS, 14 July 1953; ibid., pp. 1380-82, 15 July 1953; Hermes, Truce Tent, p. 483.

<sup>117</sup> NA, RG 59, lot 53 D 413, Telegram CX 63690, 14 July 1953.



At the 19 July meeting at Panmunjom the UNC achieved a satisfactory outcome. It was decided to rely on liaison officers to determine all important issues: the location of a final demarcation line, the place for delivering non-repatriate POWs, the time and date of a cease-fire, and the arrangements for signing documents. The staff officers of both sides were able to settle three of the four outstanding details concerning the armistice. In the early morning of 23 July both sides agreed to a line of demarcation and the demilitarised zone. They also established a procedure for each side to turn over its non-repatriates to the Repatriation Commission in its own half of the demilitarised zone. The role of the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) was left to the Commission itself. In its first meeting, the day after the armistice was signed, the Commission would begin to determine its own method of operation.<sup>118</sup>

At the meeting of liaison officers on 26 July, the Communists refused the signing at Panmunjom by supreme commanders, on the grounds that the UNC had refused to exclude Chinese Nationalist and South Korean press correspondents. The UNC maintained that these press observers would constitute no threat to the security of the Communist commanders, but agreed to the Communist side's proposal for initial signing by senior delegates at Panmunjom, with the supreme commanders signing later at their headquarters.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1432-1436, Clark to JCS, 25 July 1953; Hermes, Truce Tent, pp. 484-487.

<sup>119</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1441, Clark to JCS, 27 July 1953; Clark, From the Danube to the Yalu, pp. 292-293.

At 10:12 a.m. on 27 July 1953, U.S. General William Harrison and North Korean General Nam Il signed the armistice documents at Panmunjom, without South Korean representatives whose participation was blocked by Rhee.<sup>120</sup>

In conclusion, as the cold war intensified in the 1950s, small countries within each bloc could manoeuvre to implement their own interests as long as they stuck to the ideology of the superpowers. Each of the two superpower's primary objective was to extend its own bloc amongst small and uncommitted states at the expense of its rival and preventing the other rival from expanding its influence on its own allies. Small allies require, however, the existence of the other bloc in order to maintain their value as allies for their own bloc.<sup>121</sup> Under this circumstance, small allies could convert the alliance into an instrument of their policies with superpowers. According to Astri Suhrke, the initial commitment of a large power to a small state may reflect any of the following considerations: a desire to control the activities of the small state, a desire to deny its territory to an adversary, a wish to support the legitimacy of a particular government, or an attempt to impress third parties by maintaining that particular alliance. Conversely, the small state's bargaining power stems from the same considerations. It can threaten the large ally's desire for control by attempting to trigger it into an unwanted conflict or by seeking a separate accommodation with the common

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<sup>120</sup> Clark, From Danube to the Yalu, pp. 294-295; Hermes, Truce Tent, pp.489-490.

<sup>121</sup> Robert L. Rothstein, Alliances and Small Powers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 244; Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, 'Alliance Strategy: U.S.-Small Allies Relationships', Journal of Strategic Studies, 3(1980), p. 203.



adversary. To make the small state desist from such moves, the large ally may feel obliged to offer certain rewards or concessions.<sup>122</sup>

As a small state's leader, Rhee pursued tactics of unreliability or concessions towards the United States. Together with his strong anti-Communist posture and solid domestic power, Rhee was effective in employing calculated proposals for bargaining purposes. His anti-Communist stance reflected not only the conviction of anti-Communist groups in Congress but also American public opinion. He manipulated the differences of American political groups and organisational interest groups. The bargaining methods he employed were bluffs, threats, intransigence, and unpredictability. They were used individually or simultaneously. When he conceived the intention of the Communists' willingness to negotiate an armistice agreement following Stalin's death in March 1953, he renewed his violent opposition to ending the war even though he realised his objections would not succeed since the Eisenhower administration was determined to end the war by means of negotiations. Once the Eisenhower administration was determined to end the war, he threatened to withdraw his forces from UN control and to fight alone against the Communists until he unified Korea. If South Korean forces were used for unauthorised offensive operations, it would provoke communist retaliation. Subsequently, the armistice would be postponed, engaging American forces in further hostilities. Rhee's threat to take unilateral action was less credible, but, at the same time, his propensity for rash action increased. Rhee knew that his conditions were unrealistic, but equally worthwhile since they presented a way in which South Korea could extract major concessions from the United States. Without a formal American commitment to preserve the security of South Korea, the

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<sup>122</sup> Astri Suhrke, 'Gratuity or Tyranny: The Korean Alliances', World Politics, 25(1973), pp. 508-509.



political position of Rhee would have been in serious jeopardy. When the larger ally depends on supportive actions by small allies in order to advance its interests, small allies increase their bargaining power not only in one issue but also to affect other issues to maximise its overall influence.<sup>123</sup> Although Rhee was not successful in attaining his main objectives—unification of Korea and immediate withdrawal of Chinese Communist forces, and promulgation of a mutual defence treaty before the armistice—his methods were quite effective for bargaining purposes. American officials in South Korea recommended an early conclusion of the mutual defence treaty and aid programmes. Immediately after Rhee's sudden release of POWs the Eisenhower administration speeded up its response to Rhee's demands to prevent further incidents. The release of POWs put the Eisenhower administration in a delicate dilemma, jeopardising its effort to come to an agreement with the Communists. Moreover, the Communists clearly believed that without South Korea's support, any armistice agreement with the United States would be irrelevant. Creating such doubt was Rhee's deliberate intention when he decided to release the North Korean prisoners.<sup>124</sup> He tried to discredit the United States in the eyes of the Communists and, by doing so, stop any attempt to reach agreement with the Communists at Panmunjom without any concessions from the United States.

The United States failed to persuade Rhee to accept an armistice agreement without reprisals. Since the United States had to pay attention to its global priorities and

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<sup>123</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), pp. 10-11.

<sup>124</sup> Chang Jin Park, 'The Influence of Small States upon the Superpowers: United States-South Korean Relations as a case study, 1950-1953', World Politics, 28 (1975), pp. 112-113.



objectives that limited the conflict to Korea, they were often forced to soften their position, and submit to Rhee's tactics. Consequently, the Eisenhower administration not only agreed to conclude a security pact with South Korea, but also to spend billions of dollars on its rehabilitation, thereby guaranteeing Rhee's position following the war.

Rhee's ability to influence the United States remained limited in spite of his potent bargaining. As a small country's leader, he could not change U.S. policy, but only exploit the situation insofar as their interests coincided. This success was possible only under circumstances where the United States was dedicated to maintaining its global policy, containment of Communism, and in doing so, support its small ally, South Korea.

## **2. Post-Armistice Issues and the Korean phase of the Geneva Conference, 1953-1954**

The Korean Armistice Agreement was a temporary measure to secure a complete cessation of hostilities and all other acts of military forces in Korea until a final peaceful settlement was achieved. After the armistice agreement was signed, the main issue highlighted was a Korean political conference. In February 1952, at Panmunjom, the decision was taken giving rise to the Korean political conference. This resulted from a compromise between the determination of the United Nations Command to confine the discussions on stopping the fighting to military matters, and the view of North Korea and the PRC that no peaceful solution could be achieved unless major political tensions were eased.<sup>1</sup> The Korean armistice agreement indicated that a political conference should be convened within three months to settle the question of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea and the peaceful settlement of the Korean question.<sup>2</sup>

The precise subject matter of the Korean political conference was vague and nothing was dealt with in the Korean armistice agreement about the place, the participants, voting procedures, and so on. Prior to Korean attendance at the 1954 Geneva Conference, three controversial issues had to be resolved: (a) the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, The Geneva Conference, vol. 16, pp.193; Sydney D. Bailey, The Korean Armistice (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> The Korean Armistice Agreement, Article IV, 'Recommendation to the Governments concerned on Both Sides', 27 July 1953.



Union's participation and in what capacity; (b) the status of the PRC; and (c) India's participation as a neutral nation.

While the United States had no objection to Soviet involvement on behalf of the Communist side, the PRC claimed the right to participate as a neutral. The status of the PRC had become a delicate and complicated question for the Eisenhower administration, which could not help being aware of the conservative congressmen's concerns that the conference would enhance recognition of the PRC. More importantly, Rhee would not dispatch his delegation if the U.S. showed any sign of diplomatic recognition of Communist China. Finally, Rhee made it clear from the beginning that Indian influence, which was boosted by Great Britain, should be curbed as much as possible by the U.S. Dulles too was suspicious of India's position in the forthcoming conference.

In the context of U.S.-South Korean relations, the Korean political conference at Geneva between 26 April-15 June 1954 was manifested in another bargaining seesaw between the two governments. Rhee's apparent capriciousness conduced to his advantage prior to and during the conference. The Eisenhower administration desired Rhee's acquiescence in the conference as was the case with the armistice agreement but it would meet ~~great difficulty~~ with Rhee. From Rhee's point of view, any political conference was taboo, since he had been opposed to any truce without unification, and was aspiring for a resumption of war even after the truce. One of the main objectives of those who pursued the idea of a political conference was to utilise it to relax tension still prevalent in Korea even after the Korean armistice and to settle the new system of division in Korea. Rhee's Government did not want this kind of settlement. Rhee thought that the conference was fraught with dangers: while the Communist side was well united, the West was fragmented in his view; the situation would be unpredictable

if India were to participate in the conference as Britain and the Communists had been advocating; and the conference might even turn out to be a gamble in which the fate of Korea would hang in the balance.

The American idea of the conference was like an extension of the American hegemony in world affairs. The conference was to be organised as a two-sided arrangement, not a roundtable, in which the allies led by the United States would confront the Communist side across the table. Accordingly, there was of course to be no room for the neutrals. Furthermore, the propaganda value of the conference was its main element in the mind of the Americans.<sup>3</sup> The United States had a plan to keep the Korean political conference as small as possible and limit it to the nations that had armed forces in Korea.<sup>4</sup> Dulles thought that a very large conference would be less likely to accomplish results than one with rather limited participation.<sup>5</sup>

On this point, the Eisenhower administration was in accord with South Korea. As a matter of fact, the American and South Korean proposals for the conference had more in common with one another than with any other of the allies, although they had prepared them separately without prior consultations.

This period offers an ideal case study of small state behaviour in response to superpower influence. Together with U.S.-South Korean relations between 1953 and 1954, it is important to explore more fully why the Korean political conference in Geneva was originally convened and why it failed to reach any agreement on Korean

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<sup>3</sup> NA, RG 59, Decimal File, 396.1/6-1654, The Geneva Conference, Fifteenth Plenary Session on Korea, 15 June 1954.

<sup>4</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, p.1456, State-JCS Meetings, 31 July 1953.

<sup>5</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/8-153, Special Korean Briefing Meeting, 1 August 1953.



unification. States come into conflict with others when they have different objectives. In this case, the larger partner, like the United States, had a wide range of methods such as use of force, offers of rewards, and persuasion, with which to deal with smaller states. The smaller state like South Korea had no resource except bargaining with the United States. Within this paradigm, some questions arise us to how and to what extent Rhee and his government could negotiate successfully with the Eisenhower administration and what were the sources of South Korea's bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States.

As stipulated in Article IV., no. 60 of the armistice agreement,<sup>6</sup> the United States and Communist China, after two months of communications, agreed to hold preliminary talks at Panmunjom for the purpose of deciding the location, the date, and the composition of the Korean political conference. During the period from the Korean armistice up to the preliminary talks, the leading participants in the Korean political conference were engaged in deciding their respective roles and objectives concerning Korean interests at the forthcoming conference. The preliminary talks, which began on 26 October 1953 and continued until 12 December 1953, were insulting between the U.S. and the Communist delegates, and unproductive, with the matter of composition proving the most difficult problem to resolve. Rhee's recalcitrance vis-à-vis the Eisenhower administration arose again when the Panmunjom talks collapsed without any agreement. He was equally unyielding when the Four Powers' foreign ministers meeting in Berlin in February 1954 decided that the Korean part of the conference

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<sup>6</sup> The Armistice Agreement had recommended that a political conference...of both sides should be convened within three months to settle through negotiation the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc.

would be held in Geneva and combined with the Indo-Chinese issue during April-June 1954. Once again the U.S. government had to negotiate to get Rhee's cooperation as it had in establishing the Korean Armistice.

The day after the armistice was signed, Secretary Dulles announced his visit to Korea to discuss with Rhee a number of common concerns about the development of a common position at the political conference, economic aid, and a United States-South Korea mutual defence treaty.<sup>7</sup> Secretary Dulles left for Korea on 2 August 1953. From their first meeting on 5 August, they talked about the political conference and agreed that: the agenda should be confined to the Korean question only; the allies' participants should be kept to a small number in order to control them more easily as the Communists would succeed at the conference by having absolute control of their delegates; and they would leave the conference after 90 days if they were not satisfied with the Communists' proposals.<sup>8</sup>

At their final meeting on 7 August, although Rhee and Dulles were mainly in accord about the nature of the Communist menace and how it should be dealt with, they disagreed over the question of how to achieve Korean unification. While Dulles adhered to a peaceful method, Rhee insisted again on unification by military means. Both engaged in 'brinkmanship' with a gambler's instinct to win all that they could. Rhee seemed desperate to obtain a firm U.S. commitment after the Korean political conference and, in that case, he needed to know whether the United States would

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, pp. 176-177, 10 August 1953.

<sup>8</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1468-1471, Memorandum by Young, 5 August 1953.



resume the fighting.<sup>9</sup> To this Dulles firmly reiterated that President Eisenhower and he could not give any such commitment to resume war in connection with South Korea. Both were forced to play roles they could not avoid. Although they tried to persuade each other, they could not reach an agreement. The principle of Korean unification was left unsettled with Dulles' pointed argument that "the United States could not let President Rhee or his government decide what the United States should do, nor let President Rhee or his government overrule our judgment on what action to take."<sup>10</sup> On 8 August, the joint communiqué announced that South Korea and the United States would withdraw from the political conference after ninety days if it failed to achieve peaceful unification.<sup>11</sup> Dulles gave a pledge that he would not exchange UN recognition of the People's Republic of China for agreement on Korean unity, thus restricting the scope of the meeting before it had actually been agreed to.<sup>12</sup> Rhee gained virtually nothing from his negotiations with Dulles. Rhee's strong efforts to obtain a more definite U.S. commitment pending the failure of the political conference, or to insert automatic U.S. military involvement in the draft mutual defence treaty, were not accepted by Dulles. Dulles warned Rhee that the U.S. Senate and Congress would not accept it.<sup>13</sup> Rhee's bargaining position through these meetings was not as substantial as before the armistice was signed. Once he had agreed to the armistice, his greatest bargaining tactic—obstructing the armistice—was no longer valid. The unsettled

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<sup>9</sup> Robert T. Oliver, Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942-1960 ( Panmun Book Company: Seoul, 1978 ), pp. 429-431.

<sup>10</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1486-1489, Memorandum of Conversation, 7 August 1953.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, pp. 203-204, 8 August 1953.

<sup>12</sup> NA, RG 59, Department of State Press Release, no. 453, 28 July 1953.

problem—how to achieve Korean unification—along with Rhee’s unpredictability, however, enabled him to manoeuvre and embarrass the Eisenhower administration before and during the forthcoming Korean political conference.

The Korean political conference was highly controversial about the selection of the participating countries. After the Korean armistice was concluded, the Eisenhower administration laid out some principles for the conference: the political conference should represent the two belligerent sides and it was not to be a ‘roundtable’ conference with the participation of neutrals; the conference would deal only with Korean problems; but this did not exclude the possibility that if the Korean Conference went well, it might with different membership be transformed into another conference to deal with other subjects. The inclusion of South Korea was so indispensable that no conditions should be attached to the political conference which could reasonably lead to non-participation by Rhee’s Government.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, Dulles was very concerned about Rhee’s attitude over the political conference. In his message to Walter Bedell Smith, Under Secretary of State, he stated that “we faced the problem of Rhee’s going along with the political conference since we had to use up all the bargaining power we possessed to get President Rhee to go along with the armistice.”<sup>15</sup>

The participation of India had been a troublesome issue before the Panmunjom preliminary talks began. The United States and South Korean governments were in concurrence over the Indian involvement in Korean issues. This scepticism had its

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<sup>13</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1484, Memorandum of Conversation, 7 August 1953.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 1492-1493, Dulles to Lodge, 13 August 1953.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 1495-1496, Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the Under Secretary of State, 14 August 1953.



origins in the question of how to deal with POWs during the Korean War. In October 1952 the United States introduced a resolution to the UN General Assembly, to reinforce the American position concerning the nonforcible repatriation of POWs. In an effort to break the deadlock on POWs, Krishna Menon of the Indian delegation made a proposal in November 1952 to turn over the prisoners to a neutral commission outside of the control of the United Nations Command. The commission would handle the fates of the POWs at the hand of the Communists, of which the provisions for disposing of non-repatriates were of particular concern to the U.S. and South Korea, as the proposal suggested that the POWs who refused repatriation would remain captives until they accepted a return to their homelands. For this reason, following the Korean cease-fire, the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), which consisted of India, Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, in conjunction with Indian armed forces, were responsible for approximately 23,000 POWs unwilling to be repatriated. Rhee's Government threatened to interfere with the movement of the Indian Force from Inchon to Panmunjom, so the forces had to reach Panmunjom by helicopter because the South Korean government would not allow them to pass overland into their territory.<sup>16</sup>

The PRC and North Korea were adamant that the conference should be a round table discussion with neutral state participation so as to expedite the proceedings of the conference. The participation of neutral states was favoured by the Commonwealth countries, such as Great Britain, Canada, and Australia, which were obviously partial to the idea of a role for India in the Asian problem. The problem of Indian participation developed into a major diplomatic conflict between the United States and Great Britain. Britain intended to press for the UN membership of the PRC in the political conference

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<sup>16</sup> Bailey, The Korean Armistice, pp. 142-143.



with the support of the neutral countries, particularly India. The Indian position regarding the issue was to be understood in terms of the pursuit of its role and status in world politics. India attained the status of a great diplomatic power with worldwide influence through its diplomatic manoeuvres during the Korean War. This was quite a jump as an ex-colony and a newly independent country, for which the British support was of course an important factor. Great Britain on its part could make good use of India for its own diplomatic objectives through reinforcing it as a kind of mouthpiece for the third world countries. In any case, the political conference was a good chance for India to confirm and enhance its status and role in world affairs. World opinion was also inclined favourably towards Indian participation. As the participation of India was a delicate subject in relations with Rhee's Government, the United States persuaded India not to take part in the conference in return for supporting Mrs. Srimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit as President of the General Assembly. Great Britain was discontented with the U.S. attitude towards India.<sup>17</sup>

The bitterness between Korea and India during the Korean War made it impossible for the United States to persuade Rhee to accept Indian involvement.<sup>18</sup> The United States came to realise the implications of the problem of Indian participation and used the South Korean opposition to India as a ground for its own objection. Faced with

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<sup>17</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1493-1495, Memorandum by Lodge, 14 August 1953.

<sup>18</sup> Since Rhee had always objected to a forcible repatriation of the POWs, he regarded India as pro-Communist as the Nehru government issued a proposal on POWs in 1952 that seemed to create the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), the real purpose of which would be to send the prisoners home against their will. After the Korean armistice was concluded, Rhee adamantly refused to hand over Korean non-repatriates to the NNRC and he did not permit any Indian troops on South Korean soil as neutrals or anything else.



Britain's demand for India's role in Geneva, Dulles cautioned Eden that if Great Britain was so anxious to have India in the conference, it should persuade Rhee to agree to this.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the U.S. attempted to effect India's voluntary withdrawal from the Korean political conference.<sup>20</sup> Despite these U.S. efforts, India went on actively promoting its own case even after the British had given up on this.<sup>21</sup> Despite a series of persuasions, the United States was unable to prevent Krishna Menon from arriving in Geneva and playing an informal role on the edge of the conference.<sup>22</sup>

### **Preliminary Political Talks at Panmunjom**

As stipulated in the Korean Armistice Agreement, the United States and Communist China would hold talks after two months of communications.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 27 August 1953.

<sup>20</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1500-1501, Allen to the Department of State, 26 August 1953.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 1521-1524 and 1531-1534. Menon asked Dean to give him a mission to Beijing to transmit the American view to the Chinese, and told Dulles that India should be in the conference because the Communists insisted on its participation.

<sup>22</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, The Geneva Conference, p. 332, Memorandum of Conversation, 1 June 1954; PRO, FO 371 110563/FK 1071/495.

<sup>23</sup> For details, FRUS, vol. 15., p. 1531. Communications between the United States and Communist China began with Secretary Dulles' initiative on 14 August 1953. At the request of the Secretary, Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, contacted Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold as to whether the Swedish embassy in Peking could ask if Chinese Premier Chou En-lai intended to hold a Korean political conference. On 17 August, the Swedish embassy replied that Chou desired the conference. On 12 October, when the United States accepted the Communist suggestion of Panmunjom as the site, the conference came to be held.

Eisenhower administration appointed Arthur H. Dean, the Deputy to the Secretary of State for the Korean Political Conference, to discuss with the Communists—North Korea and the PRC—at Panmunjom the date, location and other organisational questions of the conference. He met with the Chinese delegate Huang Hua and his North Korean counterpart Ki Sok Bok. However, the colloquy had scarcely begun when disputes arose over the agenda. The preparatory talks, which began on 26 October, were unproductive with the matter of composition of the conference proving the most difficult problem to resolve. The Communist side demanded that the content of the conference be agreed upon first and the United States insisted that the settlement of a time and place should be given priority. They also disagreed over who would attend the conference. As to the problem of Soviet participation the Eisenhower administration was not opposed. However, it insisted that the Soviet Union should be in the conference as representing the Communist side.<sup>24</sup> The American motive behind its insistence on Soviet participation was to not allow China a recognition of its international status. Insisting that the Soviet Union, India, Pakistan, and Burma should be invited as neutrals, the Communists refused further discussions with the U.S. delegation.

After three weeks of insignificant talks at Panmunjom, delegates of the United States and the Communists agreed to discuss simultaneously any items on the agenda on 14 November.<sup>25</sup> This marked a retreat from the assertion by the Communists that the composition issue should be solved first. In return, the Communists repeated their previous claim that the Soviet Union should participate as a non-voting neutral. In reaction to this, Dean proposed the idea that all five members of the Neutral Nations

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<sup>24</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1155, 1170 and 1494.



Repatriation Commission (NNRC)—Czechoslovakia, Poland, India, Switzerland, and Sweden—be invited as observers.<sup>26</sup> On 20 November, the State Department instructed Dean to seek full participation of the Soviet Union as contemplated in the General Assembly resolution of 23 August 1953.<sup>27</sup> In order to facilitate the talks, the State Department proposed the participants' solution, that is, fifteen UN nations plus South Korea and five NNRC members.<sup>28</sup> A few days later, Dean obtained South Korean agreement to the five NNRC members as observers.<sup>29</sup>

The preliminary discussions at Panmunjom dragged on through November and half of December 1953 without resolving the basic differences of the opposing sides over composition. At Dean's suggestion, the outstanding issues were discussed at the subcommittee level and after two weeks a plan was devised for simultaneous discussion of composition, time, and place of the proposed Korean Political Conference. On 30 November, Ki Sok Pok, North Korean delegate, submitted a plan for the political conference to begin at New Delhi on 28 December which included five neutrals—the Soviet Union, India, Pakistan, Burma, and Indonesia. Neutrals would have the right to

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<sup>25</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/11-1453, Telegram p140712z, 14 November 1953.

<sup>26</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/11-2053, from Munsan-Ni, Dean to Dulles, 20 November 1953.

<sup>27</sup> At the Seventh Session of the GA, resolution 711 (VII) was adopted calling for UN participation at the Korean political conference limited to those nations "contributing armed forces under the Unified Command in Korea" which desired to be represented plus the Republic of Korea. The resolution also called for participation by the Soviet Union if the other side desired it.

<sup>28</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/11-2353, Memorandum of conversation, 'Ambassador Dean's Proposals Re Composite List and Observers for Korean Political Conference', 23 November 1953.

<sup>29</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/11-2653, Dean to Dulles, 26 November 1953.

take part in the discussion, but decisions at the conference would be by unanimous agreement of the signatories of the armistice.<sup>30</sup>

The Communist side's insistence that the Soviet Union be considered a neutral, South Korea's opposition to India's participation, and the general inability to agree to the kind of role neutral nations would play at the conference proved in the end to be insurmountable problems. At a meeting with Rhee and his associates, Dean had to acknowledge South Korea's firm position: they insisted upon (a) listing the USSR on the other side, (b) the other 15 UN members contributing forces could not vote, and (c) no neutrals could be invited under any conditions whatsoever.<sup>31</sup> In this connection, Rhee's extreme insistence could pave the way for his bargaining with the U.S. to meet his objectives even though he was not fully satisfied with the outcomes.

In response to the Communist proposal of 30 November, Dean put forward a 'package proposal' on 8 December which attempted to maintain the principle of a two-sided conference (with the Soviet Union as a voting member on the Communist side) while allowing for limited neutral nations' participation. It was rejected by the Communist side on the grounds that it did not recognise the Soviet Union as a neutral and that it unreasonably limited neutral participation. Four days later, the negotiations ended acrimoniously with charges and countercharges between the representatives of both sides. Huang Hwa of the PRC accused the United States of perfidy in conniving with Rhee in the release of POWs in June 1953. In return, the U.S. representative

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<sup>30</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/11-3054, Telegram 119, 30 November 1953.

<sup>31</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1649-1651, The Representative for the Political Conference (Dean) to the Department of State, 7 December 1953.



branded the PRC and North Korea as Soviet agents, the remark which had outraged the Communist delegates. Dean used it as the reason for recessing.<sup>32</sup>

As the preliminary talks with the Communists were stagnant, the Eisenhower administration began to worry again about a possible resumption of hostilities by President Rhee. Unable either to withdraw from Korea or to join Rhee's attempt in the renewal of fighting, the Eisenhower administration took every practical measure to prevent unilateral action. To this end, the United States prepared a plan which included an immediate termination of military and economic support to South Korea in the event of South Korean forces' attack on the Communists.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, the administration took advantage of Vice President Richard M. Nixon's previously planned visit to Korea, which was another setback to Rhee. Eisenhower felt that Truman had neglected the Asians, and hoped that Nixon might cultivate some friendships in that part of the world.<sup>34</sup> Nixon arrived in Korea with a letter from President Eisenhower on 12 November 1953. In his talks with Rhee, Nixon was assigned a delicate diplomatic task. Eisenhower wanted Nixon to get Rhee to

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<sup>32</sup> Department of State, Bulletin, pp. 877-878, Dean's proposal of 8 December and 21 December 1953; Robert Murphy, Diplomat among Warriors (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 360.

<sup>33</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 6, 'U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea,' NSC 170/1, 20 November 1953.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962 (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1987), p. 315. Eisenhower thought that Nixon needed to ~~be~~ publicly associated with something other than Red-baiting. It all started at an NSC meeting in March 1953 when Eisenhower casually asked Nixon to visit as many Asian countries as possible. Nixon put nineteen, plus Hong Kong and Okinawa, on his itinerary. Eisenhower asked him to carry a specific message to Rhee.

guarantee that he would not launch an invasion of North Korea. In an attempt to obtain such an assurance, Eisenhower warned that if South Korea initiated military action while the Communists were complying with the armistice, the South Koreans would “face disastrous defeat and might well be permanently destroyed.” Nixon believed he had received Rhee’s confirmation that South Korea would not provoke hostilities against the Communists without prior consultation with Eisenhower, so that Eisenhower could give a clear assurance to the Senators when the treaty was submitted in January 1954.<sup>35</sup> The task was difficult, not only because Rhee was constantly making public statements about his intentions to invade, but also because Nixon agreed with Rhee and disagreed with Eisenhower. Nixon, like Dulles and much of the military, had opposed the armistice that Eisenhower had accepted in July 1953. They wanted to fight on to victory, just as Rhee did, not abandon half of Korea to the Communists.

President Rhee did not give any explicit assurance that he would not renew hostilities.<sup>36</sup> Given this situation, the Eisenhower administration could not help worrying that if Rhee came to believe that the U.S. was not adamant against involvement, or that it could not keep from becoming involved even against its own wishes, it was highly likely that Rhee would initiate hostilities.<sup>37</sup>

When Nixon pressed Rhee again, Rhee emphasised the advantage for the United States and the free world that his unpredictability was a constant check on the

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<sup>35</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 37, Eisenhower to Rhee, 4 November 1953; Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, Draft letter, 3 November 1953.

<sup>36</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 37, Rhee’s letter to Eisenhower, 16 November 1953.

<sup>37</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00, Korea, Proposed reply by the President to Rhee, 18 December 1953.



Communists.<sup>38</sup> He said in conclusion: “Any statements I have made about Korea acting independently were made to help the United States; in my heart I know that Korea cannot possibly act alone.” That was the assurance Nixon needed but did not really want. Returning from his mission, Nixon reported to a National Security Council meeting his impression of Rhee’s complexity, and stressed making a distinction between his public actions and his private thoughts.<sup>39</sup>

Following the deadlock of the Panmunjom preliminary talks in mid-December 1953, the issue of who would participate in the political conference became more delicate and complex. China’s opposition to the Soviet Union as a full participant at the conference was fully exposed. As the Chinese regarded themselves as the principal Communist power concerned with Korean matters, they could not understand the reason for U.S. insistence on the Soviet Union’s participation on the Communist side, and as a voting member. The American insistence at Panmunjom that the Soviet Union attend the conference as a full voting participant was put forward as a counter-argument to the Chinese Communist demand that the Soviets be invited as a non-voting neutral. The Chinese view was that the Korean question was primarily a Chinese problem which did not concern the USSR. The Chinese did not understand why the United States in effect did not accept them as the number one spokesman with regard to Korea. They thought that if the USSR was not a member of the conference nor a signatory, the bargaining power of the Chinese Government over a guarantee either of South Korea or of all Korea would increase greatly. However, in fact, the United States were aiming to diminish the status and prestige of the Chinese Government through the USSR’s

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<sup>38</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1609, Draft telegram from Nixon, 13 November 1953.

participation in the political conference.<sup>40</sup> Great Britain was for the Soviet participation but did not want the conference to founder on this issue.<sup>41</sup>

Peking's opposition to Moscow as a full participant led the State Department to examine the possibility of holding the Korean political conference without the Soviet Union's participation. Concurrently, on 30 December, Dean recommended to Dulles the consideration of the non-participation of Russia, which was followed by leading State policy-makers' endorsement.<sup>42</sup> Secretary Dulles was prepared to reconsider the U.S. position in view of the present estimate that the conference would fail to achieve major agreements on Korea's future and was likely at best to do no more than arrange a *modus vivendi* to supersede or supplement the Armistice Agreement. He felt that Soviet adherence to such an arrangement was not essential.<sup>43</sup>

The breakdown of the negotiations at Panmunjom was a cause of rising anxiety amongst the Western allies about the future of non-repatriated POWs. With pressure building from some UN members, in particular the UK, the United States tried to resume the talks. In relation to this, Secretary Dulles asked Ambassador George V. Allen to conduct a high-level approach to India requesting that it act as matchmaker for the revival of talks. While Washington policy-makers made efforts to ease these

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<sup>39</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 175<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 15 December 1953.

<sup>40</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1690-91, the Deputy Representative for the Korean Political Conference (Young) to the Department of State, 3 January 1954.

<sup>41</sup> PRO, FO 371/110540, Crowe Memo, 'Korean Political Conference', 7 January 1954.

<sup>42</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/ 12-3053, Murphy to Dulles, 31 December 1953; RG 59, 795.00/1-654, Merchant to Dean and Murphy, 6 January 1954.

<sup>43</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/1-754, Dulles to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, 7 January 1954.



obstacles, the deterioration of dialogue which had been caused by mutual insults between the United States and Chinese delegates was a further impediment to the resumption of negotiations.<sup>44</sup> The obstacle could be overcome by Dulles' suggestion that "expunging the Panmunjom record was removed under same qualifications" where the U.S. withdrew the charge that "Chinese Communists were Soviet agents."<sup>45</sup> However, the Communists showed no concern or interest in the problem of retracting the perfidy charges.<sup>46</sup>

While the desirability of the political conference without Moscow's participation was discussed in the Eisenhower administration, the release of non-repatriate POWs by the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission on 23 January 1954 drew attention.<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup> For details, see pp. 88-89.

<sup>45</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1691-1692, Dulles to the Embassy in India, 4 January 1954.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 1714, Young to the Department of State, 9 January 1954.

<sup>47</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-1853, Smith to Dulles, 18 May 1953; Se-Jin Kim (ed.), Documents on Korean-American Relations, 1943-1976 (Seoul: Research Center for Peace and Unification, 1976), p. 175.

Pursuant to the terms of reference for Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, signed at Panmunjom on 8 June 1953 as an annex to the Armistice Agreement, the UNC transferred all non-repatriate POWs to the NNRC on 24 September 1953. During the ninety days after the NNRC took over the custody of the POWs, the Chinese and North Korean explainers asked the non-repatriates to return to their home countries. Paragraph 11 for NNRC terms of reference, however, provided that "at the expiration of 90 days after the transfer of custody of the prisoners of war to the NNRC, access of representatives to captured personnel...shall terminate [23 December 1953], and the question of disposition has been agreed to by the Political Conference within 120 days [22 January 1954] after the NNRC has assumed their custody." If no solution emerged, the remaining prisoners would be released as civilians or the matter referred to the UN General Assembly. U.S. secured pledges from its allies that in such an event, they would vote for release.

terms of reference of the NNRC in the Korean armistice agreement indicated that if no solution emerged within one hundred and twenty days of the NNRC assuming control, either the remaining prisoners would be released as civilians or the matter would be referred to the UN General Assembly. By the end of 1953, the NNRC was faced with the fact that the fate of more than twenty thousand prisoners was to be settled within a month by a political conference whose details had not yet been finalised. Although China was opposed,<sup>48</sup> the Eisenhower administration pushed the Indian government to suggest that the NNRC should declare the POWs' status as civilian. On 5 January 1954, Ambassador Allen requested full cooperation with the plan, and cautioned R. K. Nehru, Secretary of External Affairs, about the likelihood of the mass breakout by the Communist POWs and of the Indian Custodial forces' firing to maintain order unless they were released on that date.<sup>49</sup> Realising that India could be responsible for such an incident, the Indian government authorised the chairman of the NNRC, K. S. Thimayya, to enact the release of non-repatriates to the United Nations Command.<sup>50</sup> On 14 January 1954, he informed General John E. Hull, the new United Nations Commander, that the NNRC would return all the non-repatriates on 20 January.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the Indian government decided to submit the final disposition of non-repatriate POWs to the UN

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<sup>48</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/12-2953, U.S. Embassy in London to Dulles, 29 December 1953.

When Chou En-lai talked with Indian Ambassador Nedgan Raghvan, Chou delivered his government's objection to the release of non-repatriated POWs on 23 January 1954.

<sup>49</sup> FRUS, Vol. 15, pp. 1696-97, Allen to Dulles, 6 January 1954.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 1725, Young to the Department of State, 15 January 1954.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bulletin, p. 114, 25 January 1954.



General Assembly on 10 January.<sup>52</sup> The Indian government intended to have both UN and Communist commanders retain the POWs until the UN General Assembly passed judgment. India's main objective was to soothe the Chinese Communists' fury over the decision to turn over the non-repatriates to the UNC because they regarded the release as a psychological and diplomatic defeat. In its reply to the Indian action, the United States opposed the resumption of the Assembly, maintaining that the special session would not serve any useful purpose with regard to the POWs and the Korean Political Conference. Secretary Dulles suspected that India would seek to bring up the Korean Political Conference issue and demand the invitation of Communist China and North Korea to the General Assembly.<sup>53</sup>

The United States acknowledged that Anthony Eden supported the Indian appeal for a resumed session.<sup>54</sup> When Dulles discussed the issue with Eden in Berlin on 23 January, Eden excused himself on the grounds that the special session would merely pass a resolution expressing appreciation to India and the other NNRC member nations for their work in handling the POWs. In reply Dulles stressed the United States' chief responsibility for Korean problems, and criticised other allies' attempt to maximise their national interests through the Korean Political Conference. Dulles warned Eden

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<sup>52</sup> Yearbook of the United Nations, 1953 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 130.

The UN General Assembly adopted a Brazil-India joint draft resolution which requested the President of the General Assembly to reconvene the eighth session, with the concurrence of the majority of member states, if in the President's opinion developments in respect of the Korean question warranted such reconvening, or one or more member states made a request to the President for such reconvening by reason of developments in respect of the Korean question.

<sup>53</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1728, Dulles to the U.S. Mission at the UN, 20 January 1954.

that the United Kingdom “could not be allowed to play this game.”<sup>55</sup> This attempt by India to reconvene UN General Assembly on 9 February in order to deal with remaining POWs problems was defeated because of insufficient UN members’ support.<sup>56</sup>

On 23 January, UN Commander General Hull set free 22,000 Chinese and North Korean non-repatriates and proclaimed their civilian status.<sup>57</sup> The Eisenhower administration welcomed this news. At the meeting of the National Security Council, Allen Dulles, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, stated that this release of prisoners “constituted one of the greatest psychological victories so far achieved by the free world against Communism.”<sup>58</sup>

Since the problem of the USSR and the type of conference seemed impossible to solve with the Chinese and North Korean Communists at Panmunjom, Kenneth T. Young, Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs in the State Department, recommended a change of venue from Panmunjom and a move to open new talks, rather than resuming the present ones. This was seriously considered by high ranking officers in the Department.<sup>59</sup> On 26 January, surprisingly, the Communists asked for the unconditional resumption of the Panmunjom talks recessed since mid-December. But the U.S. felt that there was no immediate need for the Communists to reconvene the

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1734, Parkman to the Department of State, 20 January 1954.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, The U.S. High Commissioner in Berlin to the State Department, 24 January 1954; Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), pp. 69-70.

<sup>56</sup> Bailey, *The Korean Armistice*, p. 148.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Bulletin*, p. 152, 1 February 1954.

<sup>58</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 181<sup>st</sup> NSC Meeting, 21 January 1954.

<sup>59</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 15, pp. 1721-1722, Young to the Department of State, 13 January 1954.



talks since the POW issue had resolved itself.<sup>60</sup> The U.S. believed that Peking feared being deceived by the Soviet Union and the Big Four Powers in Berlin regarding Asian problems and, therefore, preferred resuming talks with the U.S. at Panmunjom.<sup>61</sup> The preliminary talks at Panmunjom failed to settle any issues with regard to a forthcoming Korean political conference. The problem of the Soviet Union's participation would be turned over to the Berlin Conference to decide. However, China suffered another bout of frustration because the U.S. chose to negotiate about this directly with the Soviet Union at Berlin, and even more so as China was invited by the Soviet Union to the Korean Political Conference.

## **The Berlin Conference**

During the latter part of 1953 and early 1954, the Communists launched a peace initiative. This was due to the death of the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in March 1953, after which the collective leadership needed to reduce international tension. On 28 September 1953, the Soviet Union sent a proposal to the United States, France and Britain, calling for a five-power conference, including Communist China, to examine ways of reducing international strain. Approximately 10 days later, Chou En-lai announced support for the Soviet proposal. The Communist motives were regarded as being designed to weaken Western unity. At that time, as the Eisenhower administration

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 1736-1737, Young to the Department of State, 26 January 1954; ibid., Smith to U.S. Delegate at the Berlin Conference, 28 January 1954.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth T. Young, Negotiations with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1953-1967 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), p. 32.

maintained an intransigent attitude towards the Soviet bloc, the British and French governments were cautious about Soviet intentions.

The question of convening the Korean political conference was at last resolved at the Berlin Conference, convened in January and February 1954 to discuss German and Austrian matters. On 9 January 1954, Chou claimed the settlement of urgent Asian problems through consultation amongst the big powers involved.<sup>62</sup> Concurrently, Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, suggested a five-power international conference to deal with the situation in Asia on 25 January. The Soviet Union wanted a five-power conference on a wide range of problems. There was initial opposition from the United States, but Great Britain and France were eager to see a solution to the disputes in the region,<sup>63</sup> while the Eisenhower administration would not endorse any action which might be construed as even tacit recognition of Communist China. Public opinion in Britain and Western Europe had been greatly excited by the prospect of an end to the Cold War.<sup>64</sup>

At the beginning of the conference, Secretary Dulles clashed with Molotov, who had proposed a five-power conference, to include the Peking regime, to seek measures for reducing tension in international relations. Dulles, on the other hand, who thought that non-recognition of the People's Republic of China would diminish its international

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<sup>62</sup> Zhai Qiang, 'China and the Geneva Conference of 1954', *The China Quarterly*, 129 (1992), p.107.

<sup>63</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 16, p. 415, Press Release, 19 February 1954.

<sup>64</sup> John W. Young, in Young (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime administration 1951-55* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), pp. 60-61; Kevin Ruane, 'Anthony Eden, British Diplomacy and the Origins of the Geneva Conference of 1954', *The Historical Journal*, 37,1 (1994), p. 156.



influence, refused to discuss global issues with China.<sup>65</sup> In reality the five-power question was to prove an extremely dangerous one for the Western alliance and its unity at Berlin. Whereas the Eisenhower administration had pursued a strict containment policy towards Communist China since the Korean War, British policy was a combination of containment and compromise, not containment and confrontation. Any attempt by China to extend its influence by force was to be resisted, but in other circumstances British policy rested upon acceptance of the facts of the situation, the avoidance of provocation, and gradual progress towards more normal trading and diplomatic relations. The British government always insisted that the end of fighting in Korea should be followed by efforts to normalise relations with China, including a resolution of the Formosa question and of the status of China's seat at the UN.<sup>66</sup> For this reason, Anthony Eden presented the idea of a five-power conference limited only to Asian issues. He was deeply worried that the increasingly perilous situation in Indochina would threaten Great Britain's interest in Malaya.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault suggested to Dulles that the forthcoming Korean Political Conference be expanded to discuss the Indochina issue. The French government wanted to talk with Peking about the future of Indochina because of China's role with the Viet Minh, whose considerable amount of war material was supplied by Peking.<sup>68</sup> Dulles had earlier objected to any French talks with

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<sup>65</sup> David Mayers, 'Eisenhower's Containment Policy and the Major Communist Powers, 1953-56', The International History Review (February 1983), pp. 65-66.

<sup>66</sup> PRO, FO 371/109272/101, Makins to London, 9 January 1954; Ruane, op.cit., pp. 156-157.

<sup>67</sup> Eden, Full Circle, pp. 97-98.

<sup>68</sup> Zhai Qiang, op. cit., pp. 103-107.

the Viet Minh and the Chinese Communists until France improved its negotiating position with a military victory. The situation began to change with the deterioration of the French military position and with strong French domestic pressure to end the Indochina War. Bidault urged Dulles to put Indochina on the Geneva agenda. He warned Dulles that France might desert the project of the European Defence Community, which was then the top U.S. priority. Ultimately, Dulles had to submit to French pressure.<sup>69</sup>

At the same time, Eden had to use all his powers of persuasion to secure American acceptance of a conference with China. He proposed another formula to “meet the bear without parting us from the eagle” by simply dropping the distinction between inviting and invited powers.<sup>70</sup> The United States would invite the allies and the Soviet Union would ask China and North Korea. Through this solution, the Eisenhower administration would be saved from being at the conference on equal terms with China, thereby recognising it as a great power. Dulles wanted to insert in the final communiqué

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<sup>69</sup> PRO, FO 371/109278/311, Minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session, Berlin, 28 January 1954.

On the E.D.C. see Edward Fursdon, The European Defence Community: History (London, Macmillan, 1980). The outbreak of the Korean War led the U.S. and Great Britain to suspect that the war might be a diversionary tactic and the prelude to Russia’s military attack on Western Europe. In order to reinforce NATO strength, Washington demanded West German rearmament, which caused great alarm in France. France consequently attempted to ensure that West German rearmament was tightly controlled through the creation of a supranational European army, which was eventually accepted by NATO members and evolved into the E.D.C.. In May 1952 France, Italy, the Benelux countries, and West Germany signed an E.D.C. treaty. By the time the Berlin conference commenced in January 1954 the French had yet to ratify the treaty.

<sup>70</sup> Eden, Full Circle, p. 99.



a statement that China's participation would not mean diplomatic recognition by the United States. Molotov accepted such a provision in a marginal schedule of the Berlin Conference.<sup>71</sup> At any rate, it gave the Peking regime a chance to stand equal with the four big powers.

The conference finally agreed to summon an international meeting to restore peace in Korea and Indo-China. In a communiqué the four ministers from France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States agreed that the political conference should be held at Geneva on 26 April 1954.<sup>72</sup> In addition to these four powers, Geneva brought together most of the other countries with an interest in the Korean and Indo-Chinese problems. This included the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) which, by its participation, brought to an end a period of diplomatic isolation. All the invited states agreed to participate in the conference except South Africa, which decided to leave Korean matters to the countries much more directly concerned.<sup>73</sup>

The Berlin Conference provided a crucial basis for West European unity. In the view of public opinion in France at the time, the United States aroused French criticism as to whether the conference was sacrificed for the sake of Washington's global anti-Communism policy. Great Britain also regarded Dulles' refusal of China's participation as unreasonable and neglectful of the interests of its allies.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Dulles was

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<sup>71</sup> Department of State, Foreign Ministers Meeting, Berlin Discussions, 25 January-18 February 1954 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. x.

<sup>72</sup> Rosemary Foot, A Substitute for Victory (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 202.

<sup>73</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 58-59, Dulles to the Embassy in South Africa, 26 March 1954.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Randle, Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1969), p. 26. and p. 46.



obliged to defend himself in America against those who objected to any negotiations with Communist China at Geneva. When news of the Berlin agreement reached Washington, conservative Republicans declared that it amounted to actual recognition of the Peking regime. During the ensuing months William Knowland, the Senate Republican leader and the most formidable member of the congressional Chinese lobby, vehemently criticised Dulles for having agreed to take a seat with the Peking regime.<sup>75</sup> South Korea complained that it had been ignored during the Berlin Conference and made a point of condemning the Berlin agreement.<sup>76</sup> By the end of March such criticism was to have some effect. Aware of this, the United States attempted to play down the

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<sup>75</sup> Henry W. Brands, JR., 'The Other Geneva Conference', Pacific Historical Review, 56 (1987), p. 67.

The China Lobby encompassed the various organisations and individuals that emerged after World War II as a powerful pressure group for U.S. support of the Nationalist Chinese government under Chiang Kai-shek in its struggle against Communist forces under Mao Tse-tung. After Mao's 1949 victory and Chiang's retreat to the island of Taiwan (then commonly known as Formosa), the China Lobby bitterly criticised the U.S. decision not to aid Chiang, accusing the Truman administration of losing the Chinese mainland to communism. In August 1949 Secretary of State Dean Acheson released the China White Paper defending U.S. policy not to intervene in the Chinese civil war on behalf of Chiang's corrupt regime. In the early 1950s, the lobby actively backed Chiang's return to the mainland. As it became apparent that this was unfeasible, its emphasis shifted to the defence of Taiwan and the international isolation of the People's Republic of China. Former President Herbert C. Hoover in 1953 headed a national group that formed the Committee of One Million against the admission of Communist China to the United Nations. Other prominent members of the China Lobby were publisher Henry R. Luce, former ambassador to China General Patrick J. Hurley, and U.S. Senator William F. Knowland (R-CA), known as 'the senator from Formosa'. The lobby's influence on U.S. policy faded in the 1960s and effectively ended with the Nixon administration's historic 1971 opening to Communist China.

<sup>76</sup> New York Times, 11 March 1954.



Geneva Conference.<sup>77</sup> Throughout the conference, Dulles remained sensitive to indications of congressional and public criticism of the administration's conduct at Geneva. His behaviour there must have pleased his political detractors. Dulles even refused to shake hands with the Chinese premier when the latter approached him at Geneva.<sup>78</sup>

### **The Eisenhower Administration's Inducement of Rhee**

It was a period of tension and hard bargaining in Korean-U.S. relations---the two months between the times when the Conference was agreed in Berlin and when South Korea finally agreed to take part in it. South Korea complied in the end but only after obtaining promises, both pragmatic and political, from the United States to support its programme of military build-up and also to pursue some of their common policies during the conference.

South Korea initially opposed the conference because it had less leverage in a multilateral conference. Rhee predicted no useful results from multinational conference talks with the Communists. He was concerned over an indefinite delay of Korean unification and feared that a 'package deal' for both Korea and Indochina would emerge from secret understandings amongst the great powers. He suspected the likelihood of turning over South Korea to the Communists in return for westernisation of Indo-

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<sup>77</sup> New York Times, 26 March 1954.

<sup>78</sup> C. L. Sulzberger, A Long Row of Candles (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 1003.

China.<sup>79</sup> This suspicion mainly resulted from his independence movement for Korea during the Japanese colonial period. At that time, the U.S. had recognised Korea's annexation by the Japanese in compensation for the Philippines through a secret treaty.<sup>80</sup>

Any political conference was a taboo for Rhee, who was opposed to any truce without unification and had aspirations for a resumption of war even after the truce. In this sense, the South Korean opposition to a political conference was not just for the sake of principles. One of the main objectives of those who pursued the idea of a political conference was to utilize it to relax the tension still prevalent in the Korean peninsula even after the conclusion of a truce, and to settle the new system of division in Korea. Rhee was naturally averse to this kind of settlement. There were of course many additional reasons for Rhee to oppose the conference. Firstly, the conference was fraught with dangers. While the Communist side was well united, the allies were fragmented in their views and policies. The situation would be unpredictable if India was to participate in the conference as Britain and the Communist side had been advocating. The conference might even turn out to be a gamble in which the fate of the country would hang in the balance. This appeared to be borne out when Washington did not seek any prior understanding from South Korea, let alone consultation, when they agreed to hold the political conference during the Berlin Conference. They did not hurry

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<sup>79</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol.16, pp. 18-19, Briggs to the Department of State, 19 February 1954;

KPR, Foreign Ministry, 726.23 1954/137, Pyun to Secretary Dulles, 3 March 1954.

<sup>80</sup> Taft-Katsura Agreement was signed by the Secretary of War William H. Taft and Japanese Premier Taro Katsura on 29 July 1905. By the terms of this agreed memorandum, the U.S. recognised Japanese dominant position in Korea and Japan disavowed any aggressive designs on the Philippines.



to notify Rhee's Government about this agreement. As a result, Rhee was suspicious about U.S. policy towards Korea.

Secondly, from the South Korean point of view, the conference would only improve the position of the Communists, both morally and politically. The Communists had already been condemned as aggressors by the UN. It would only compromise the effect of the resolutions for the UN side to be in a meeting like this, sitting at the same time with the aggressors. Besides, it was to be expected that such a conference would also enhance the international standing of Communist China. Rhee thought it was a conference in which South Korea had everything to lose and nothing to gain.

President Rhee tried to assert his limited influence on the United States by asserting that the Korean political conference could not be competent without South Korea's presence. On 11 March, President Rhee wrote to Eisenhower about his seemingly unilateral action to unify Korea, and preconditioned the ROK's attendance at Geneva on whether the United States would "either (a) agree to assist South Korea in military efforts to unify Korea or (b) strengthen the ROK forces in accordance with his requests."<sup>81</sup> As a result of Rhee's letter, the exchange of ratifications for the Mutual Defence Treaty, which had been scheduled for March 18, was to be postponed until Rhee promised further cooperation with the U.S. position. The Eisenhower administration rejected Rhee's alternative proposals, although it suggested the possibility of developing a mobilisable reserve in South Korea.<sup>82</sup> On receiving the reply,

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<sup>81</sup> DDE library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 37, Rhee to Eisenhower, 11 March 1954.

<sup>82</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, President Eisenhower's letter to Rhee, 20 March 1954; DDE Library, John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject Series: Korea, Dulles to Rhee, 20 March 1954.

although Rhee did not state whether South Korea would attend the conference or not,<sup>83</sup> Rhee decided not to boycott the conference, but he wanted to know U.S. intentions regarding his request for additional ROK divisions and on U.S. policy after the conference, which was unlikely to succeed in agreeing a political settlement of Korean unification.<sup>84</sup>

South Korea used its decision on participation as its main bargaining lever in discussions with the United States. President Rhee tried to evade talks with the United States prior to the conference in order to have a free hand at the conference. The Eisenhower administration criticised Rhee's Government for failing to provide a ROK representative at consultations over the line to be taken at the Geneva conference.<sup>85</sup> Secretary Dulles was also worried about unity with South Korea in achieving maximum effectiveness to prevent the Chinese Communists from gaining any political advantage at Geneva.<sup>86</sup>

Undeterred, Rhee held to his course, but he softened his stance with pathos. Rhee's Government came up with modified proposals, asking for a substantial increase in the fighting capability of its armed forces including immediate training and equipping of up to 20 new ROK divisions.<sup>87</sup> On 8 April, Rhee notified Eisenhower that South Korea's attendance at Geneva was conditional on a U.S. assurance of

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<sup>83</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp. 1774-1775, Progress Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to NSC, 26 March 1954.

<sup>84</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 75, Embtel 951, Briggs to the Department of State, 30 March 1954.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-70, Memo by Noel Hemmendinger, 5 April 1954.

<sup>86</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Secretary Dulles to President Rhee, 7 April 1954.

<sup>87</sup> PRO, FO 371 110544 FK 1071/112 (B), 6 April 1954.



strengthening his forces.<sup>88</sup> The Eisenhower administration contemplated its response to Rhee's last appeal and decided to save Rhee's face. At the meeting of the National Security Council, Eisenhower gave directions that although Rhee was still requesting excessive costs in military enforcement, the administration should not reply to President Rhee "by throwing a wet fish in his face."<sup>89</sup>

In view of the very limited time left before the conference, the United States consulted its allies on the general position to be taken at Geneva. On 7 April, the United States notified the representatives of the allies of its main goals at Geneva, which were the maintenance of the integrity of South Korea, no agreement on any decision without joint U.S.-South Korea endorsement, and the achievement of South Korean unification policy.<sup>90</sup> Commonwealth representatives opposed such principles and preferred all-Korean elections for a new Korean government. As a result, the Eisenhower administration needed to reach a compromise between South Korea and the Commonwealth position. On 12 April, Alexis Johnson, the Coordinator for the Geneva Conference, outlined the U.S. plan for Korean unification at Geneva. They proposed holding an election under international observation for the ROK Assembly throughout both North and South within the framework of the present ROK Constitution, possibly accompanied by a popular election for President.<sup>91</sup> During the following week, in order to soften President Rhee, General Van Fleet had been chosen by Eisenhower as his

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<sup>88</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Rhee to Eisenhower, 8 April 1954; DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, Rhee to Eisenhower, 8 April 1954.

<sup>89</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 193<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting, 13 April 1954.

<sup>90</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 81, Dulles to Briggs, 8 April 1954.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 93-94, Johnson to the Acting Secretary of State, 12 April 1954.

Special Representative to survey military establishments in the Far East, including South Korea.<sup>92</sup>

In his letter to Rhee on 16 April, Eisenhower confirmed the programme for the continuing improvement of the ROK forces with additional U.S. assistance. At the same time, Ambassador Briggs was instructed to intimate to Rhee that final action on any plan for aid should depend on South Korea's continuing cooperation with the U.S., including South Korea's attendance at the Geneva Conference.<sup>93</sup> As the result of Eisenhower's confirmation of additional U.S. assistance, Rhee ultimately agreed to send Foreign Minister Pyun to Geneva because he had secured his objective and a face-saving resolution from the United States. On 19 April, even though Rhee expressed his reluctance to participate in the conference, he issued a statement on South Korea's attendance at the Geneva Conference. Dulles was 'gratified' to receive this news.<sup>94</sup> Even though the Eisenhower administration succeeded in luring South Korea to attend the conference, the United States would find itself at Geneva in the embarrassing position of having major differences on the Allied side.

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105, Eisenhower to Rhee, 16 April 1954.

<sup>93</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Eisenhower to Rhee, 16 April 1954.

<sup>94</sup> KPR, 726.23/137, Rhee to Eisenhower, 19 April 1954; *ibid.*, Dulles to Rhee, 19 April 1954.



## THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

The Geneva Conference on Korea was called pursuant to Paragraph 60 of the Armistice Agreement and the Berlin communiqué. The two belligerent sides were to meet to seek a peaceful settlement of the Korean question, observing that the establishment by peaceful means of a unified and independent Korea would be an important factor in reducing international tension. While the conference was held from 26 April to 15 June, none of the countries concerned with the Korean problem seriously attempted to come to any agreed conclusion for Korean unification. The United States realised that the conference could at best be a temporary expedient for complementing the Korean armistice agreement. The U.S. government decided that its delegates would not accept any invitations to gatherings to which the Communist Chinese or North Koreans had been invited.<sup>95</sup> The Western allies held different opinions from the U.S. over the objectives of the conference. France was so involved in Indo-China that it could not be engaged in the Korean question. The Commonwealth countries, Britain in particular, began looking for an alternative to the rigid bipolar world situations, focused around “American hegemony unprecedented in history in both its intensity and scale.”<sup>96</sup> Purely from the point of view of its results, the leading position of the United States in the Western bloc was reconfirmed through this conference. Nevertheless, in spite of America’s tough stance against the Soviet bloc,

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<sup>95</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 118, Johnson to Dulles, 20 April 1954.

<sup>96</sup> PRO, PREM 11/668, Eden to Churchill, 23 November 1953.

Great Britain took advantage of this conference to improve its relations with Communist China as it had always wanted to do.

The most important thing for the ROK was that it was the first major international conference in which South Korea participated as a sovereign state.<sup>97</sup> South Korea was an important element in terms of substance throughout the conference, from the beginning to the end, influential in helping to define organisation, negotiations and conclusion.<sup>98</sup>

Much time was spent on the Allied side in discussions of the seating arrangements which had remained a matter for conflict up until its opening, reflecting the differences in the ideas of the major participants. The American idea was a two-sided arrangement but the British wanted a round table around which all the participants would be seated together. As the British expected that the United States would not attend the conference if the seating arrangements were not satisfactory, the seating was arranged according to the alphabetical order with a podium, but the form of the conference was a two-sided one as the U.S. had insisted. Dulles was determined that the South Korean delegation should be seated next to the U.S. delegation so as to prevent the South Koreans from going in a different direction during the conference.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Yung Tae Pyun, Woegyo Yeorok [A Résumé of Diplomacy] (Seoul: Hankook Ilbo Sa, 1959), p. 118.

<sup>98</sup> Pyo-wook Han, Hanmi Woegyo Yoram Ki [Handbook of Diplomatic Relations between the ROK and the United States] (Seoul: Joongang Ilbo Sa, 1984), p. 213.

<sup>99</sup> PRO, FO 371/105180, 'Brief for the UK Delegation to the Bermuda Talks', 25 June 1953; FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1502; FRUS, vol. 16, p. 3; PRO, FO 371/110551, Washington to FO, 14 April 1954; KPR, 726.23 1954/137, 'Special Briefing Meeting', 20 April 1954.



The discussions on Korea, which eventually comprised 15 plenary meetings and one restricted meeting, were arranged by rotating the chairmanship amongst Prince Wan of Thailand, Molotov, and Eden.<sup>100</sup> When the Geneva Conference began, the American delegation found itself coping with what seemed to be an almost insuperable problem: how to bridge the gap between Rhee and the European allies, who were willing to make compromises in Korea to ease the threat of a general war; and how to prevent an overriding influence by the European allies in the affairs of East Asia. If the gap could not be bridged, the Eisenhower administration would be forced to choose one side or the other. Such a decision, of course, would have symbolised the failure of American policy. The goal of the administration was to avoid having to make such a choice. Accordingly, the American delegation went to Geneva with three alternative Plans—labelled A, B, and C—for the unification of Korea.

Plan A was projected to attract Rhee. It called for unification through incorporation of North Korea into the existing Republic of Korea: new elections would be held only in North Korea; the constitution of the ROK would become law for all of Korea, and Rhee's Government would remain in power. Plan B called for elections in North and South Korea to establish a Korean National Government within the ROK constitutional structure. Plan C, which was similar to a unification scheme forwarded by British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden for Germany, was intended to appeal to the Europeans; it offered the greatest chance for a successful resolution of the Korean problem. Under this plan, both the government and the constitution of the ROK would be dissolved; country-wide elections would then select delegates to a constitutional

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<sup>100</sup> Department of State, Pamphlet No. 5609, The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, released in October 1954.



convention that would create a new Korean state. Mutual phased withdrawals of foreign military forces from Korea would proceed, mediated by the new commission. The South Korean government strongly opposed the plan because the ROK would be superseded, and it would be on a par with the North Korean regime.

Plan A was not welcomed by the Commonwealth countries because they regarded it as unreasonable and bent towards Rhee's Government.<sup>101</sup> The Commonwealth and many countries of the world preferred Plan C to Plan B on the grounds that Plan C was more objective and impartial vis-à-vis the present Korean authorities. Another argument for this plan was that the same general plan proposed by the three powers for Germany should be applied to Korea. Between the two extremes was Plan B, which was thought by the U.S. to be an acceptable choice for the allies. An all-new legislative assembly would be convened following elections throughout the entire country and elections would then be held for president. An indication that the primary focus of the Eisenhower administration was keeping its alliance system, rather than the unification of Korea, was the fact that none of the three plans were thought to have much chance of gaining Communist approval.<sup>102</sup>

Substantive discussion began on 27 April 1954. Foreign Minister Pyun proposed South Korea's unification policy which would entail, under United Nations supervision, elections in North Korea only. He announced that elections had already occurred in South Korea to the satisfaction of the UN and one hundred seats were left for the North Korean representatives. North Korea rejected the proposal. Instead, its Foreign Minister

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<sup>101</sup> Brands, 'The Other Geneva Conference', p. 73; Foot, A Substitute for Victory, p. 204.

<sup>102</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 82-87, Van Hollen memorandum, 9 April 1954; ibid., pp. 105-111, 16 April; ibid., pp. 131-139, 24 April; Brands, 'The Other Geneva Conference', pp. 72-73.



Nam Il proposed: an all-Korea committee should be established to prepare for elections in the whole of Korea and to facilitate contact between North and South; withdrawal of all foreign forces was essential within six months, while there should be agreement that the all-Korea elections established a government representing the whole country.<sup>103</sup> Under the North Korean plan a government with representatives from both Koreas would be set up to administer all Korea while a nation-wide election was being held, giving the North Korean regime an equal voice in such a government. Also, such a government would be in complete charge of supervising the election without outside interference. This meant that the United Nations would play no role whatever in the settlement of the Korean issue. Questions were raised about the proposed all-Korea committee and whether it would represent the two parts of Korea proportionately to population. North Korea's rejection of the role of the UN was based on the following charges: (1) the United Nations itself had been a belligerent in the Korean War; (2) United Nations resolutions on the Korean War lacked validity since the Soviet Union and Communist China did not participate; (3) United Nations supervision in Korea would constitute foreign intervention; and (4) the Geneva Conference had nothing to do with the UN and was not committed to accepting any decision of the UN.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 148-150, The United States Delegation to Dulles, 27 April 1954; U.S. Department of State, The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, 26 April - 15 June 1954 (Washington, Government Printing Office), pp. 34-39; British White Paper, Documents relating to the discussion of Korea and Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, 27 April - 15 June 1954, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954) Cmd. 9186, pp. 1-5.

<sup>104</sup> New York Times, 2 May 1954.

On behalf of the allied side, Dulles criticised the North Korean proposal which made no mention of the United Nations or its resolution of 7 October 1950, calling for supervised elections in the northern part of Korea.<sup>105</sup> In response, Chou En-lai condemned South Korea and the United States for creating obstacles to peace by concluding a mutual defence treaty, and by Rhee's threatening a march to North Korea. Chou argued that the PRC fully supported North Korea's proposal with provision for all-Korean elections without foreign intervention, which should include the withdrawal of foreign forces, and vehemently denounced the United States intervention policy towards Asia.<sup>106</sup> Dulles, however, rejected the all-Korea committee plan, and criticised the fact that the proposal demanded equal representation from North and South Korea, disregarding the fact that South Korea controlled over three-quarters of the Korean population while North Korea ruled only one-quarter.<sup>107</sup>

In the meantime, most of the allies other than the U.S. and South Korea were at first reluctant to participate in the debate. This was due to their unwillingness to support South Korea's position that Chinese military troops should withdraw from North Korea while UN forces would remain in South Korea.<sup>108</sup> They also ducked South Korea's insistence that elections for unification should be held in North Korea only. This was considered to be unreasonable not only by the western allies but also by international public opinion. There was pressure to present a revised South Korean proposal which would go further to meet the Communist position from Great Britain and the

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<sup>105</sup> Document relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China at the Geneva, pp. 14-20.

<sup>106</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 153-155, The United States Delegation to the Department of State, 28 April 1954.

<sup>107</sup> The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, pp. 45-53.

<sup>108</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Summary Record of Conversation between Rhee and Dean, 26 April 1954.



Commonwealth. On 29 April at a meeting with chief delegates of the other allies, Dulles emphasised that the primary issue was the quality of supervised elections in Korea rather than the territorial scope of elections. But Eden and other Commonwealth representatives insisted that something should be done immediately to counter Communist plans.<sup>109</sup> That day Australian Foreign Minister Richard Casey suggested that “elections be held throughout Korea not only on the basis of proportional representation between the North and South but also under the UN supervision.” Delegates from the West European allies presented a similar plan. Paul Henri Spaak, the Belgian Delegate, expressed the view that while North Korea’s conditions for elections were unacceptable, the North Koreans had a much sounder position in terms of general public impression than did the South Koreans. Accordingly, the allies expressed their hope that South Korea should be induced to counter with a proposal for all-Korean elections under effective supervision of the United Nations, for the allies’ unity.<sup>110</sup> It would make clear that a failure to reach agreement on Korea was the fault of the Communists and it would also prevent the Communists from winning a propaganda victory.

As anticipated prior to the conference, the Allies’ disunity was disclosed. Dulles criticised the European allies for not defending the United Nations or the United States position in connection with the Communists’ verbal insults.<sup>111</sup> He tried to intimidate Eden by threatening that “the close United Kingdom-United States relationship would be harmed if Britain’s passive attitude continued.” Eden accepted the making of a

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<sup>109</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 156, Second Meeting of the Heads of the 16 Allied Delegations, 29 April 1954.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp. 161-165, The United States Delegation to the Department of State, 29-30 April 1954.

speech in support of America, and explained the Western countries' objection to the South Korean election formula. Eden suggested to Dulles a restricted meeting in order to promote the conference.<sup>112</sup>

At a restricted session on May 1, with the four main powers, Communist China, North and South Korea, Dulles proposed four points to discuss: elections to be under UN auspices; scope and character of elections; disposition of foreign troops in Korea; and provision to protect Korean independence, including the demilitarisation of border areas. The Communist side, however, rejected the UN observation of elections because the United Nations was a belligerent in the Korean War, whereby the UN had lost its competence and moral authority, and thus was not a neutral party in the Korean problem. Instead Peking suggested a 'Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission' to undertake this task. This proposal was turned down by Dulles on the ground that the role of the UN was ignored. The restricted session held on Korea thus only confirmed that both sides had no intention of modifying their positions.<sup>113</sup> In an effort to downgrade the importance of the conference, Dulles returned to Washington on 3 May, leaving Under Secretary Smith to head the American delegation.

Meanwhile, in Seoul and Geneva, delegates of the State Department engaged in painstaking negotiations with the South Korean leaders to encourage them to accept the United States' position. At the meeting with Dean and Briggs, Rhee agreed to elections for both the National Assembly and the Presidency in North and South Korea, but in

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<sup>111</sup> PRO, FO 371 110559 FK 1071/419, 11<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session, 22 May 1954.

<sup>112</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp.165-168, Dulles-Eden Meeting, 30 April 1954.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp. 174-177, Restricted Session of the Seven Powers on Korea, 2 May 1954; Documents Relating to the Discussion---at the Geneva Conference, p. 12.



return he required the complete withdrawal of Chinese Communist forces as well as complete surrender of the North Korean army to South Korea before the elections.<sup>114</sup> This requirement to accomplish the negotiations for Korean unification was quite unrealistic. However, South Korea believed that unless it insisted on its own policy, neither ally could help South Korea. Since the United States, as the leader of the free world, had to listen to other allies' opinions, it was sometimes forced to follow a majority view. So long as South Korea kept to its position, the United States could avoid any negative stand by pointing to South Korea's intransigence.<sup>115</sup>

In answer to Plan B, which the American delegation thought was the most practical under all circumstances, Rhee's Government had a basic fear that plan B was merely the first step in a whittling-down process. Rhee's Government objected to the plan. Its reasons against were (1) the plan derogated from the sovereignty of the ROK Government; (2) it lacked authority to hold the proposed elections under the ROK constitution; (3) announcement of such new elections for Assembly and President would cause great consternation in Korea and the people would think the Communists had gained too much from this concession; (4) in effect, Rhee's resignation would be required if the plan were accepted; and (5) it was utterly impossible to hold elections while Chinese Communist forces were in Korea and until the ROK got complete administrative control of North Korea.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, Rhee personally agreed to have

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<sup>114</sup> KPR, Foreign Ministry, Political Affairs, 726.23/137, Summary Record of the call on Rhee by Dean, 2 May 1954.

<sup>115</sup> Pyun, Woegyo Yeorok, p. 82.

<sup>116</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 205, Dean-Briggs-Rhee Meeting, 5 May 1954.

elections in South and North Korea in response to Dean's question whether Rhee would accept them under the condition that the Chinese Communist troops withdrew.<sup>117</sup>

Rhee's tactics in calling for the withdrawal of Chinese forces from North Korea were apparently double-edged. On the one hand, this insistence was part of his hard-bargaining approach to negotiations with America: an apparently unreasonable position might later be bartered for a commitment to greater military support. On the other hand, in the unlikely event that the Communists accepted, such acceptance surely would be premised on the simultaneous withdrawal of American and other United Nations troops. Since the UN forces acted as a check on Rhee's ambitions, this result would not be unwelcome---the decks then would be cleared for action.<sup>118</sup> Secretary Dulles worried not only about the withdrawal of Chinese forces which was recognisably impracticable, but also about withdrawal of UN forces. American decision makers believed that the withdrawal of UN forces, which was regarded as a major deterrence to renewed hostilities from both Koreas, could wipe out the armistice and renew the conflict.<sup>119</sup>

Disastrous events, including the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the opening of the Indochina session on 7 May, shifted world attention from Korea to Indochina. Few thought Korea was so urgent. Because there was no fighting in Korea, matters could be allowed to remain in their present state for the time being, even if no agreement was

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<sup>117</sup> KPR, Foreign Ministry, Political Affairs, 726.23/137, Summary Record of the Call on President Rhee by Dean, 5 May 1954.

<sup>118</sup> KPR, 726.23/137, Geneva Conference, Summary Record, Rhee-Dean, 7 May 1954; Brands, 'the Other Geneva Conference', p. 77.

<sup>119</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, ROK Intention to Submit New Proposal to Plenary Session, 3 May 1954; FRUS, vol. 16, p. 209, Dulles to Briggs, 5 May 1954.



made. When Eden met Molotov for discussions on Korea and Indochina on 5 May, they agreed that the continuation of the status quo in Korea was inconsequential. Accordingly, the Korean Political Conference took a back seat to the Indochina conference.<sup>120</sup>

While the Big Five Powers concentrated on the Indochina situation, South Korea continued to confuse the United States in drafting details of their proposal. Suddenly, the South Korean delegation developed its own new position. On 15 May, Foreign Minister Pyun handed a new fourteen-point proposal to Robertson. The proposals primarily maintained: (a) South Korea agreed to all-Korean elections, provided they were under UN supervision; (b) the elections should be held within six months; (c) Communist Chinese troops should complete their withdrawal from Korea one month in advance of the election date; and (d) phased withdrawal of the UN forces might start before elections, but must not be completed before effective control over all Korea was achieved by the unified government and certified by the UN. However, the modified version still would not permit simultaneous elections in South and North Korea unless the Constitution of South Korea were amended before the election<sup>121</sup>

This move was obviously designed to avoid the consequences of accepting the political status of the North Korean regime and at the same time maintaining the legality of South Korea, which had already been recognised by the United Nations as the only legal government existing in Korea. The major difference between the United

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 210, Smith to Dulles, 6 May 1954.

<sup>121</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Summary Record of the Call on President Rhee by Dean, 15 May 1954; FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 278-279, Smith to Briggs, 17 May 1954; U.S. Department of State, The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, p. 123.

States draft and Pyun's proposal was that Pyun specified in detail the withdrawal of foreign forces. Pyun emphasised their insistence on total withdrawal of the Chinese Communists before elections. Robertson stressed again the importance of the U.S.-ROK agreement and 16-nation endorsement for the single basic proposal on Korea.<sup>122</sup>

The United States tried to persuade Rhee to accept the U.S. proposal before the meeting of the allied delegation on 21 May. Realising that Rhee did not accept the U.S. draft and concerned that Rhee might instruct Pyun to amend his draft to a less acceptable form, the U.S. delegation in Geneva decided to support Pyun's position with minor changes. Finally, all delegations agreed that the ROK's proposal was far better than North Korea's because the ROK had agreed to the principle of an all-Korean election, even though they did not give wholehearted support. During discussion of the withdrawal question, Canadian Foreign Minister Lester B. Pearson, supported by Eden, stressed the importance of trying to modify phrases of Chinese withdrawal and the requirement of the ROK constitution for all-Korean elections. Pyun insisted on South Korea's firm position for Chinese withdrawal because the ROK's agreement on all-Korean elections was premised on the assumption that Chinese Communist forces would be withdrawn first.<sup>123</sup>

On the following day, Pyun outlined the South Korean criteria providing for the elections under UN supervision in North and South Korea within six months. These included complete withdrawal of Chinese forces one month before the election and

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<sup>122</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 279-281, Smith to Briggs, 18 May 1954; KPR, 726.23 1954/137, U.S. Draft, 18 May 1954 and ROK Proposals, 19 May 1954; Pyun, Woegyo Yeorok, p. 88.

<sup>123</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Summary Record of the Call on Rhee by Dean, 21 May 1954; FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 304-306, Sixth Meeting of the Heads of the 16 Allied Delegations, 21 May 1954.



withdrawal of the United Nations forces when complete control over the whole of Korea had been achieved by the unified Government of Korea. The United States considered this proposal favourable and advantageous vis-à-vis free world opinion and the allied delegations in Geneva. The United States delegation was concerned lest Rhee's Government take any action to reverse the situation. A few days later, Rhee claimed that Pyun had exceeded his authority in putting forward this plan and was on the verge of recalling him from Geneva for the failure to include a provision for surrender or withdrawal of North Korean Communists.<sup>124</sup> However, Rhee's condemnation of Pyun's proposal was a diplomatic action for American eyes because, quietly, Rhee praised Pyun's accomplishment on his return from the conference.<sup>125</sup>

On 22 May, China revised North Korea's earlier plan, and proposed that all-Korean elections be supervised by the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission which would be composed of neutral nations that had not participated in the Korean War. Chou emphasised the importance of Chinese entry to the UN, by arguing that the absence of the People's Republic of China from the United Nations made UN resolutions on Korea illegal and rendered the UN incapable of dealing with the Korean question.<sup>126</sup> The United States and its allies rejected the Communists' emphasis on

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<sup>124</sup> Department of State, The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, pp. 123-124; British White paper, Documents relating to the discussion of Korea and Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, pp. 53-54; FRUS, vol. 16, p. 316, Smith to Briggs, 24 May 1954; ibid., pp. 319-320, Briggs to the Department of State, 26 May; ibid., pp. 327-328, 31 May 1954.

<sup>125</sup> Park Sil, Han Kook Woe Gyo Bi Sa [The Secret History of Korean Diplomacy] (Seoul: Hankook Il Bo Sa, 1979), p. 268.

<sup>126</sup> Documents relating to the discussion of Korea and Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, pp. 54-58; FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 310-311, Smith to Dulles, 22 May 1954.

discrediting the United Nations' role. This basic disagreement was in no way negotiable for either side. Confronted with this stalemate, the United States seriously contemplated termination of the Korean phase of the conference. The Eisenhower administration believed that the longer it continued the more chance there was that the Communists would exploit the American disposition by attempting to appeal to its allies through some formula which would evade the basic issue of the UN role in a Korean settlement.<sup>127</sup> On 1 June, Secretary Dulles instructed Smith that the break-off of the conference should be on the UN issue and that "this should be our final position."<sup>128</sup>

With the lapse of time, the allied side had revealed their split over the method of all-Korean elections. On 5 June, at the thirteenth plenary session on Korea, Molotov proposed an appropriate international commission to supervise the holding of free all-Korean elections. North Korean Nam Il and Chou En-lai reiterated their position that a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission should be established.<sup>129</sup> These proposals from the Communists were seemingly aimed at further taking advantage of differences amongst the allied side. Two days later, Dulles confirmed that the break-off of the conference was decisive while the allies were united and the position of the United States was better than that of the Communists.<sup>130</sup> President Rhee also wanted the Korean phase to be terminated without further delay.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-3154, Murphy to Smith, 31 May 1954.

<sup>128</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 334, The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Delegation, 1 June 1954.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., pp. 348-354, Smith to the Department of State, 5 June 1954; The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, pp. 137-149.

<sup>130</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 356, Dulles to Smith, 7 June 1954.

<sup>131</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-754, Briggs to Dulles, 4 June 1954; 795.00/6-1054, 10 June 1954.



The United States delegation worried that the Communists would perpetuate the Korean phase of the conference for the purpose of making a major propaganda issue out of the United States' breaking-up the conference while they still wished to negotiate. In addition, continued sessions would only renew possibilities for deepening rifts amongst the allies, and in turn this might have some effect on their respective public opinions.<sup>132</sup> Even on the strategy of terminating the conference the U.S. delegation wanted to do it on the authority of the UN, while most of its allies with the British Commonwealth argued for doing so on free elections in Korea. Up until the end of the conference, the U.S. delegation believed that the British delegates were in contact with Menon, conspiring with him behind their back and persuading others to join it against the U.S. position.<sup>133</sup> It was because of disunity in its own side that the United States rushed the conference to an early conclusion and that the West allowed a considerable propaganda advantage to the Communists in the final session. The United States on its part had neglected coordinating policy and strategy with its allies, engrossed in the problem of South Korean participation until very near to the opening of the conference.

At the fourteenth plenary session on 11 June, Eden pointed out that two issues—the authority of the UN and the question of free all-Korean elections—were primary points which had divided the UN and the Communists, and complained that neither side showed any sign of reaching an agreement.<sup>134</sup> It was clear that nothing more could be

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<sup>132</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, p. 360, The United States Delegation to the Department of State, 10 June 1954.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 340, Smith to Dulles, 3 June 1954.

<sup>134</sup> Department of State, The Korean Problem at the Geneva conference, pp. 165-168; FRUS, vol. 16, p. 363, Fourteenth Plenary Session on Korea, 11 June 1954.

achieved on the Korean phase in Geneva, and on 14 June, Secretary Dulles indicated his approval of the termination of the conference.<sup>135</sup>

The final meeting was held under Eden's presidency on 15 June. Delegations of both sides asserted their respective views. Each side blamed the other for the failure of the conference. No immediate reconciliatory gestures were made.<sup>136</sup> A declaration, signed by the sixteen delegations whose countries had participated in the Korean War, restated the principles which the UN side had consistently supported, and noted that "it is better to face the fact of our disagreement than to raise false hopes and mislead the people of the world into believing that there is agreement where there is none."<sup>137</sup> The Korean phase of the Geneva Conference was concluded.

In sum, throughout the discussions on the Korean question, the United States blocked any proposals submitted by the Communist bloc and insisted that the unification of Korea be entrusted to the United Nations. Dulles and his supporters feared that if the first phase of the Geneva Conference should succeed, then the second phase on Indo-China might also have concrete results. In that case the outcome would be a victory for the Communist bloc.<sup>138</sup>

Shortly after the conference had failed, the Eisenhower administration was again preoccupied by Rhee's commitment to undertake a unilateral military offensive to unify

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<sup>135</sup> NA, RG 59, decimal file 396.1GE/6-1454, 14 June 1954.

<sup>136</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 376-377, Fifteenth Plenary Session on Korea, 15 June 1954; ibid., p. 378, The United States Delegation to the State Department, 16 June 1954.

<sup>137</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Declaration by the Sixteen, Geneva, 15 June 1954; Department of State, The Korean Problem at the Geneva Conference, pp. 191-192.

<sup>138</sup> New York Times, 23 May 1954.



Korea, which he had disclosed in confidence to Eisenhower. In order to prevent Rhee's risky steps, Eisenhower invited him to visit Washington. Though Rhee at first refused to leave Korea, he later decided to accept the invitation.<sup>139</sup> Rhee's reversal resulted from a number of factors which might have convinced him to visit the United States to put forward his ideas concerning the development of an anti-Communist alliance in Asia, which combined Asian manpower with American guns and equipment. The influential factors for his change of mind were: the rapid deterioration in the Indochina situation and possible collapse of French military and diplomatic efforts; and the fear that U.S. policy against communism in Asia may have been softened by the influence of Great Britain, which had sought to relax tensions in the bipolar system and had a certain influence over the United States through its leadership of the Commonwealth countries.<sup>140</sup> He went to Washington on 26 July 1954. Among other things, he had the opportunity to address a joint session of Congress. His attitude on unification, however, did not change at all. Eisenhower and his associates were quite concerned about Rhee's unpredictable manner which might cause the administration to be embarrassed. For this reason, when Eisenhower met Rhee at the White House, there were no microphones provided because Rhee might try to sound off publicly in the presence of Eisenhower on Korea. Eisenhower also had considerable difficulty with Rhee and confessed, "he is a stubborn old fellow, and I don't know whether we'll be able to hold him in line with us indefinitely."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1809, Briggs to Dulles, 18 June 1954; ibid., p. 1811-1813, Briggs to Dulles, 21 June 1954; ibid., p. 1832, 10 July 1954.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 1832, 10 July 1954.

<sup>141</sup> DDE Library, James C. Hagerty Papers, Hagerty Diary, 26 and 27 July 1954.

At the meeting with Washington's policy-makers, Rhee argued his military plan for Korean unification though this would work only if the United States were willing to resort to military measures. He and other ROK officials were told that the United States would not support unilateral military action by South Korea under any circumstances. President Eisenhower strongly expressed his objection to another war in Korea which would result in all-out global war. At the same time, Rhee was notified that the U.S. was redeploying from Korea four divisions (additional to the two divisions already redeployed) and one regimental combat team. This withdrawal was to be completed about the end of 1954.<sup>142</sup> Upon his return to Korea, Rhee mounted an acrimonious anti-American campaign against the U.S. redeployment.<sup>143</sup> In order to cope with Rhee's possible continued intransigence against cooperating with U.S. policy in Korea, the Eisenhower administration considered other courses of action. These included: suspending all economic aid; reducing its relations with Rhee's Government to a minimum requirement for the maintenance of formal diplomatic relations; continuing military aid only on a minimum basis; and contacting Rhee's political opponents as well as selected ROKA commanders.<sup>144</sup> In the end, Rhee's Government subsided so as not to clash with the U.S. precipitately. Attempts to obtain from President Rhee a formal assurance in writing that he would not initiate unilateral military action at any time against the Communists were unavailing. However, in the Minute of the ROK-

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<sup>142</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Ann Whitman Diary Series, 27 July 1954.

<sup>143</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1885 and p. 1890, Briggs to the State Department, 20 September and 29 September 1954.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 1911-1914, Hull to Ridgway, 8 November 1954; ibid., pp. 1914-1915, Briggs to the Department of State, 9 November 1954.



U.S. negotiations signed by the ROK on 17 November 1953, the ROK undertook to cooperate with the United States in its efforts to unify Korea, and agreed to leave its forces under the operational control of the UNC.<sup>145</sup>

To sum up, in many respects the failure of the Korean Political Conference was to be expected. There was no fighting in Korea; neither North and South Korea were on the verge of collapse nor on the verge of victory; and none of the great powers were ready to pay the substantial price of unification. Russia and China did not want a border with American-supported South Korea threatening their sovereignty. If there had been even the faintest hope for reunification on the part of the Western side, it clearly emerged that the chances looked even slimmer in view of the development of Soviet-North Korean and Chinese-North Korean relations following the truce. According to the announcements of 8 August 1953 on the Soviet aid plan for North Korea, and on the agreements of 23 November 1953 between North Korea and China, it became even more obvious that neither the Soviet Union nor China had any intention of giving up North Korea. It was taken for granted by the West that North Korea would be rapidly incorporated into the Chinese economic sphere, judging from the reports of the Swedish Representative in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.<sup>146</sup> Despite the ultimate American goal in Korea—a united and independent free Korea—the United States

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<sup>145</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, OCB 387.4 Korea [Armistice] (File #2) 3, 2 December 1954.

<sup>146</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 121, Progress Report on NSC 170/1, 'U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea', 25 March 1954; PRO FO 371/110550, Allen to Scott, Draft Telegram, 27 July 1954.

opted to strengthen South Korea through economic and military assistance as a staunch anti-Communist ally. As a result of the failure of the conference, the military confrontation between the North and the South was left unresolved.

The Eisenhower administration thought that unification could be attained through economic means. Unification might ultimately be achieved when South Korea accomplished such economic development that it would be an irresistible force attracting North Koreans.<sup>147</sup> For the two Koreas, political and economic reconstruction was a more urgent matter, so long as the unification of Korea could not be settled on their respective terms. Thus the status quo of the Korean peninsula remained acceptable to all parties concerned.

Communist China profited most from the Korean phase of the conference. As a participant for the first time in an international conference, the Peking regime demonstrated that Asian problems could not be solved without China's cooperation. The Chinese government maximised their opportunity to promote their world power status. The United States, which had been sandwiched between South Korea and its European allies, had difficulties in shaping a common position for the UN side.

North Korea gained a great deal at the Geneva Conference which provided the Pyongyang regime with its diplomatic debut on the international level. This might well have been the primary objective of its decision to participate in the conference. North Korea apparently enjoyed the diplomatic exposures of its regime which the Geneva Conference provided.

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<sup>147</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/8-153, Memorandum of Conversation, 1 August 1953; FRUS, vol. 15, p.1503, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 27 August 1953.



As the leader of the free world, the United States had to respond to its allies' different views and also to consider the Korean problem as part of its global policy. This dilemma gave South Korea a certain leverage. Under the circumstances, South Korea could take a position equally with the great powers in the discussion of the Korean problem.<sup>148</sup>

Throughout the conference, the Communist side commanded an edge over the Western side which fuelled propaganda and left them with the relative advantage of maintaining a united front. The United States found that it was more difficult to engage in collective diplomacy with the allied diplomats than in collective defence with allied troops. The allied nations had different objectives and scope about the conference. The South Korean position was fundamentally different from either American or British positions. "What was rational for the British was unthinkable for the South Koreans, while something worthwhile to the Americans, was a foolhardy idea to the South Koreans on which they should risk their national future—an illusion morally unacceptable and practically impossible."<sup>149</sup>

Even on the strategy of terminating the conference the United States opted to do it on the authority of the UN, while most of its allies with the British Commonwealth nations argued for doing so on the issue of free elections in Korea. It was because of this disunity in its own camp that the United States rushed the conference to an early conclusion, and the West handed a considerable propaganda advantage to the Communists. The United States itself had neglected coordinating policy and strategy

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<sup>148</sup> Richard C. Allen, Korea's Syngman Rhee, An Unauthorized Portrait ( Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1960), pp. 178-179.

with its allies, fettered by the problem of South Korean participation until very near to the opening of the conference.<sup>150</sup>

There was a great gap between the idea and reality in the conference particularly on the part of the United States and South Korea. According to their opinion, the conference was an occasion for them to judge the aggressors in front of the world public. However, in actuality, it was only an occasion on which to deal with problems unsolved on the battlefield. Thus the American and South Korean position was not acceptable even to their allies. The United States appeared at times uncertain of their attitude between idea and reality. What may have seemed rational to the rest of the world was mostly impracticable in real life. The Eisenhower administration regarded President Rhee's argument as unreasonable, i.e., that North Korean forces as well as all Chinese should either withdraw beyond the border or surrender before any elections were held. Foregoing this, Rhee asked what if the Communist forces would not abide by the results of elections and were to disobey the government established thereafter, to which the U.S. Government could offer no satisfactory reply.<sup>151</sup>

As Robert Keohane describes well in his account of the dilemma of the United States and its small alliance partners, there are times when the superpower cannot easily translate its enormous military, economic, and political strength into effective influence over smaller states. U.S.-ROK relations before the conclusion of the Geneva Conference provides a clear illustration of this phenomenon. Even though Rhee had agreed to the armistice, the continued question of Korean unification, along with his

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<sup>149</sup> J. Y. Ra, Non-ended War (Seoul: Jeon Ye Won, 1994), pp. 265-266.

<sup>150</sup> FRUS, vol. 16, pp. 338-342.



unpredictability, enabled him to manoeuvre and embarrass the U.S. government before and during the Geneva Conference in 1954. Once again the Eisenhower administration had to negotiate with Rhee's Government when four big powers agreed to hold a conference in Geneva for a peaceful settlement of the Korean and Indochinese problems. Rhee opposed attending the conference until the United States promised further military assistance to his country.

While the United States viewed the situation in terms of its global context, the South Korean government suspected that the U.S. would seek an agreement with the other superpowers at the expense of South Korea. As Annette Fox argues, "while the great power might be almost the whole concern of the small state, the latter was only a small part of the concern of the great power."<sup>152</sup> President Rhee once again tried to behave recklessly towards the Eisenhower administration before and during the Geneva Conference. He evaded consultations with the American officials, delayed South Korea's attendance at the conference, and demanded firm American support for the ROK's position at the conference. Rhee went so far as to declare the probability of unilateral military action against North Korea if Washington ignored his demands. However, more advantageous to South Korea was the fact that the U.S. had to devote itself to negotiating with Rhee, principally to avoid being blamed not only by the Communist bloc but also by its allies for the failure of the conference if it could not persuade South Korea to attend. Rhee's bargaining position was further reinforced by the fact that the major powers were more concerned with their individual interests than

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<sup>151</sup> KPR, 726.23/137, Summary Record, Rhee-Dean, 26 April 1954.

<sup>152</sup> Annette Baker Fox, The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 181.

with Korean issues. Britain and France wished to settle Indochinese problems through compromise with the PRC. The Chinese government attempted to improve their international status and wished to be treated as an inevitably influential power in Asian problems. Distracted by the diverse interests of their allies at the Geneva Conference, the Eisenhower administration could not but re-evaluate the important role South Korea, which had been a mouthpiece for American hard-line anti-Communist policy since the Korean War, could play as a faithful client. This tendency was enhanced by the French force's surrender at Dien Bien Phu on 8 May in the midst of the conference. The Eisenhower administration eventually came to view staunch anti-Communists like Rhee with vital sympathy. Under the circumstances, Rhee had far more opportunity to exploit the situation to South Korea's advantage during the conference than before.

It is not clear whether Rhee was pursuing in his confrontation with the United States a pragmatic line of policy or whether he was really aiming at a resumption of hostilities in Korea. One thing is clear, however, that Rhee played his meagre hand rather well, in fact made the best use of it and led the conference itself to a satisfactory conclusion although in a negative sense. For President Rhee, even though he did not achieve the unification of the Korean peninsula, did secure other crucial objectives. South Korea was to be militarily strengthened by forming a security pact with the United States, and by gaining huge amounts of American military and economic assistance. This support would give him tremendous political power just before his resignation.



### 3. The Bilateral Military and Security Relationship

After the Korean War ended, the United States' main objectives towards the Korean peninsula were to control South Korea, its ally, and to deter its enemies, such as the PRC and North Korea.<sup>1</sup> Syngman Rhee, having only accepted the armistice in July 1953 reluctantly, once again set out to bluff the Eisenhower administration over the issue of security matters which could greatly affect the survival of South Korea. As the initial U.S. commitment to South Korea, which was designed to check Soviet and Chinese expansion in the Far East, had resulted in greater American appreciation of South Korea's strategic importance, Rhee could again exert disproportionate bargaining power over Washington with regard to military affairs. For as long as the United States was dedicated to the policy of containment of the Soviet bloc, South Korea was able to exploit the United States significantly, while some actions that were in conflict with American security interests were restrained by the United States.

This chapter traces the circumstances in which President Rhee sought means to strengthen and consolidate American commitment to South Korea by advancing South Korea's value as an ally; and how Rhee exerted his influence over the U.S. despite the considerable American assistance in South Korea.

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<sup>1</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, NSC 170/1: U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea, 20 November 1953.

## **U.S. National Interest and its Security Policy in East Asia**

U.S. foreign policy changed significantly in the 1950s as a result of the Korean War. While the desire to check and resist the growth of communism on a global level had, in Europe and the Middle East, manifested itself as containment of Soviet expansionism and aggression, in Asia there was a new opponent, Communist China. China was regarded as a close ally of the Soviet Union whose behaviour had come to be seen as equally hostile. East Asia had become an important new front and U.S. national security requirements were altered to reflect this. The defence budget was enlarged and the size of the armed forces increased as the U.S. entered into a series of pacts with many non-Communist Asian states, which included the provision of both military and economic assistance. U.S. military presence in the Western Pacific increased significantly.

The last years of the Truman administration and early years of the Eisenhower administration saw the negotiation of a series of pacts between the U.S. and the friendly Asian governments of Japan, South Korea, Formosa, and the Philippines, coinciding with the increased deployment of U.S. armed forces in the Far East and Western Pacific. The Soviet Union had been expanding towards neutral Third World countries and the Eisenhower administration sought to undermine this strategy through two channels. Firstly, non-neutral states were to be strengthened through regional alliances



and individual nation-building and, secondly, neutral states would be nullified through covert action.<sup>2</sup>

As a long-range goal in East Asia, the Joint Chiefs of Staff envisaged the emergence of a regional security pact with which the United States and possibly other major Western Powers would be associated and which would form the political and economic basis of an integrated military structure of indigenous armed forces, supplemented and complemented by the mobile forces of the United States and other associated nations. The Eisenhower administration expected that once this military posture had been sufficiently developed to permit the parent alliance to deal with Red China from a position of strength through a combination of political, military and economic pressures, a separation of Red China from the Soviet bloc could ultimately be brought about, possibly followed by the reorientation of mainland China to the West.<sup>3</sup> As a comprehensive regional security arrangement for East Asia was a long-term aim at that time, the Eisenhower administration, in the meantime, fostered bilateral and multilateral treaties among the countries of the area as an alternative.

The U.S. signed a security pact with Australia and New Zealand that became known as the ANZUS Pact. In 1954, Secretary Dulles initiated the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), a collective security association comprising the U.S., Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines. Officially, its main aim was to protect Thailand from possible Chinese attack or

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas J. McCormick, America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, Box 10, United States Strategy for Developing a Position of Military Strength in the Far East, 9 April 1954.

subversion. However, compared to NATO, SEATO was relatively ineffective, lacking NATO's joint command structure. Congress had insisted that any U.S. action in defence of its Asian allies should first pass through traditional constitutional procedures. While NATO military activities were governed by formal treaty rights and obligations, action in the name of SEATO would be subject to various executive orders and agreements, and Congressional resolutions.<sup>4</sup>

The main adversary against whom these forces were arrayed was of course Communist China. Reviewing U.S. policy in the Far East at the meeting of the National Security Council, the policy makers decided not to adopt any kind of soft policy, representing the objective of peaceful coexistence with Communist China.<sup>5</sup> The Eisenhower administration anticipated a renewal of hostilities in Korea triggered by the Soviet Union which could launch an amphibious invasion of Japan in conjunction with Chinese Communist forces. The attack could be launched concurrently with campaigns in East Asia, in the Middle East and in Western Europe where the USSR was capable of undertaking concurrent strategic air operations.<sup>6</sup> So as to cope with these possible Soviet hostilities, the U.S. was devoted to setting up overseas military bases all around the rim of the Soviet bloc. In its political objectives, the United States regarded the

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<sup>4</sup> Harold C. Hinton, Three and A Half Power: the New Balance in Asia (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 211<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 18 August 1954.

<sup>6</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Central Intelligence Agency memorandum for the Intelligence Advisory Committee, NIE 11-4-54: Soviet Capabilities and Probable Soviet Courses of Action through Mid-1959, 13 August 1954.



overseas base system as a major instrument of U.S. foreign policy and as a key to its survival as a nation.<sup>7</sup>

The predominant official and public American view of Peking for about a decade after 1950 was that it was expansionist, both by its own nature and by virtue of its presumed status as a Soviet satellite. Being expansionist, it must be contained militarily and to every possible extent isolated politically. For the U.S., the central immediate problem was the capacity of the non-Communist countries to hold out, or to be assisted to hold out, against the political, economic, and military thrust of the Chinese Communists. Subsequently, the United States directed its efforts in East Asia to foster the determination and to enlist the combined strengths of those non-Communist countries to oppose any aggressive advances by Communist China. Washington policymakers felt that to the extent that Communist control in China could be disrupted and Communist China circumscribed by effective regional opposition in East Asia, dependence upon United States military power in that area would be decreased and the United States' freedom of action in its global strategy vis-à-vis the USSR enhanced.

Fundamental to the establishment of a non-Communist position of strength in East Asia was the rehabilitation of the Japanese military forces, not along the lines of the ultra-national military attitude of pre-World War II, but along democratic and liberal lines that would enable Japan to exert a stabilising influence in East Asia. The U.S. government realised the risks of fostering Japanese military rehabilitation but considered it essential to develop the Japanese military structure to ensure that Japan would become capable of providing for its own security and becoming a contributor to

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<sup>7</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/406, The Statement by Secretary Dulles before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4 June 1958.



collective security in the Western Pacific. To achieve this, the United States would have to seek to reduce the friction and to resolve the differences which then constituted major obstacles to a collective security arrangement in East Asia. Secretary Dulles had in mind a Northeast Asia Military Pact with the U.S., Philippines, Formosa, ROK, and Japan as parties. However, the problem of Japanese-Korean relations was to be one of these obstacles to effective defence arrangements among the countries concerned.<sup>8</sup>

By 1954, in the name of containing the new Sino-Soviet bloc, U.S. world-order interests were expanded to include Thailand and Vietnam in Southeast Asia, South Korea and Taiwan in Northeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand in the Southwest Pacific, and Pakistan and Iran in Southern Asia. For the United States, 1954 was a year when its defence had been rebuilt and its nuclear stockpile was expanding rapidly. In seeking to deny the growth and expansion of Chinese Communist power and influence, the U.S. largely followed two different but complementary lines of action. On the one hand, they sought to maintain a strong military posture in Eastern Asia as a means of deterring China, while on the other hand, U.S. policy was also to build up the strength and stability of the free Asian countries around the Chinese periphery. Towards this objective, Japan, as the only real competitor to Communist China, was considered a crucial ally. From a military perspective, Japan constituted the northern anchor of the offshore island chain and provided important U.S. military bases in close proximity to the sources of Sino-Soviet power in the Far East. The bulk of U.S. tactical air strength in Asia was based in Japan; the U.S. operated extensive repair and maintenance facilities there for land and naval forces; and the logistical support for U.S.

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<sup>8</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 8, Future steps in Southeast Asia, 24 July 1954.



commitments in Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia was still dependent in large measure upon Japanese bases.

In order to defend U.S. interests in the Far East and Pacific area in the long term, the U.S. planned to: maintain the security of the Pacific offshore island chain as an essential element of U.S. security; develop the military organisation of the Manila Pact and the collective defence capabilities of the member nations; and promote the participation of South Korea, Japan, Nationalist China and the Philippines in a collective defence arrangement in which the United States would participate, and seek to link eventually with the Manila Pact.<sup>9</sup>

Besides this, the fundamental purpose of U.S. national interests in East Asia was to seek stabilisation of the region by maintaining a balance among the major powers. The equilibrium in this region was essential to peace and security, not only for this region but also for the world. Due to the unique strategic location and the violent history of the Korean peninsula, the maintenance of peace there was a primary interest of U.S. foreign policy. During the post-Korean War period, the Eisenhower administration had recurrent fears that either the Communists or Rhee would initiate new hostilities. In the event that Rhee was the trigger, Washington policy makers prepared a contingency plan for active U.S. participation in the replacement of Rhee.<sup>10</sup> For the same reason, the U.S. also disagreed with Chiang's Taiwanese government's

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<sup>9</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, 'Regional Chapters of the Department of Defense International Security Plan', 9 May 1955.

<sup>10</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 175<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Report by the Vice President, 15 December 1953; 221<sup>st</sup> NSC Meeting, The Far East, 2 November 1954.

offensive actions against mainland China.<sup>11</sup> In response to the possibility of another North Korean attack, Washington prepared NSC-170/1, which identified possible military reactions to such a contingency. Some of the alternatives included offsetting Communist China's capabilities with atomic bombs, occupation of Hainan and other off-shore islands, raids on the mainland by Nationalist Chinese forces, and a naval blockade of China's coast.<sup>12</sup> UNC forces, therefore, would stay in South Korea to prevent any likely threat to the equilibrium as long as the division in Korea remained advantageous to the overall U.S. strategy in East Asia.

Largely, though by no means exclusively, in connection with its effort to contain Communist China, the United States became involved, in the 1950s, with economic aid programmes for practically every non-Communist Asian country. There were large military aid programmes for South Korea, Nationalist China, and South Vietnam, as well as smaller ones for Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia. In addition these countries, except for Japan which was relatively prosperous, received substantial amounts of a special type of economic aid known as defence support, much of which consisted of consumer goods, and the announced purpose of which was to help them support higher defence budgets than would have been possible otherwise and to combat inflation by mopping up excess purchasing power.

In fact, in asserting and exercising its role as leader of the free world, the U.S. frequently turned to the Military Assistance Programme as a major foreign policy tool.

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<sup>11</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Administrative Subseries, Regional Country Policy Statement on Local Wars or Local Aggression, 16 September 1959.

<sup>12</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 7, NSC 170/1, 20 November 1953.



The actual effect was often to increase the political power of authoritarian governments and military elites. Such a tendency was generally regarded by the United States as an inevitable byproduct of the entire containment policy, one of whose strategies was strengthening indigenous forces on the principle of, to use one of the Eisenhower administration's slogans, 'Let Asians fight Asians'.<sup>13</sup>

The United States commitment to South Korea grew out of American involvement in the Korean War. The bipolar image of the war which informed American decision making during the Korean War continued to condition U.S. strategic thinking throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s. The Mutual Defence Treaty confirmed the American security interest in Korea as part of an effective system of regional security. Korea, integrated into the U.S.-led alliance system, became the beneficiary of the military and economic assistance that it had so desperately sought. However, the existence of a security alliance between the two countries was not a guarantee of a smooth or balanced relationship between the Rhee and the Eisenhower administrations. The two countries were far too dissimilar in virtually every respect for this to be the case. After an exchange of ratifications of the Treaty, efforts to further tie the ROK into the U.S. security system through the Western Pacific security arrangement had been started by emphasising to the ROK the need for satisfactory working relationships between the ROK and Japan. During the Eisenhower administration this grand scheme was to fail because the ROK heightened its public criticism of U.S. security policies and its propaganda attacks on Japan. The U.S. continued its efforts to formalise broad security arrangements with the ROK, but it

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<sup>13</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Miscellaneous Series, Conference in President's Office, 28 May 1954.

would prove impossible to do so, particularly with respect to arrangements involving Japan.<sup>14</sup> The Eisenhower administration sought to normalise diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan, and to develop military and economic relations between them and the United States. However, this American plan encountered strong objection from its client state—South Korea—and was continually frustrated by President Rhee, who was suspicious of U.S. attitudes towards Japanese rehabilitation after the Korean War.

The primary objectives of U.S.-South Korean military relations was the defence of South Korea against any possible external aggression and the protection of U.S. national interests in the region. The principal means of securing these objectives included a mutual defence treaty, a U.S. military presence in South Korea, and U.S. military assistance to ROK forces. This relationship was characteristically unequal because South Korea was heavily dependent upon the United States. However, the two countries' military relationships were not always harmonious as South Korean President Rhee sought to exert his bargaining power against the U.S. government, in spite of the asymmetry of capability between the two countries. The U.S. reevaluation of South Korea's strategic value enabled Rhee to exploit the Eisenhower administration on his terms even though his bargaining power had apparently decreased considerably, compared with the situation during and after the Korean War.

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<sup>14</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 50, United States Objectives and Courses of Action with respect to Korea, 2 December 1954.



## The Mutual Security Pact

Following the Korean War, South Korean demands for an American commitment to security became more continuous. Foreign Minister Y. T. Pyun called for a security pact, noting that the United States had entered into a tripartite mutual defence treaty with Australia and New Zealand.<sup>15</sup> The opening of armistice talks distressed the South Koreans because there was nothing more important to them than the unification of their country. President Rhee wanted the United States and the UN allies to win the war and thus reunite his country. In addition to the desire for unification, the uncertainty of the future might have bolstered Rhee's negative attitude towards accepting an armistice agreement. Furthermore, it was clear that the United States and other UN forces would be withdrawn once an armistice had eventually been agreed. This might have meant a repetition of the national disaster. Rhee knew that a series of pre-Korean War American policies—the hasty troop withdrawal in 1949 and the defence perimeter in East Asia excluding South Korea, declared in January 1950—had invited the North Korean attack. He wanted a firm guarantee from the United States before agreeing to an armistice that it would prevent further aggression from North Korea in the future. However, the Eisenhower administration had not been willing to negotiate a security pact with the ROK because of their reluctance to assume such commitments on the Asiatic mainland and also because of the divided position of Korea which made the risk of war an abnormal hazard, which was not the case with the island countries.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> KPR, 741.14 Treaty-624/228, Statement by Pyun, 20 August 1951.

<sup>16</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00, General Records of the Department of State, Special Korean Briefing Meeting, 1 August 1953.

From the beginning of the armistice negotiations, Rhee had tried to deter the talks. Having serious troubles with Rhee, the Eisenhower administration considered alternatives, not only conciliatory, but also in the form of threats.<sup>17</sup> At the climax of this seesawing—the Rhee-Robertson negotiations in July 1953—South Korea was to receive concessions from the United States such as a mutual defence treaty, long-term economic and military aid, and possible joint U.S.-South Korea withdrawal from the Korean Political Conference.

The day after the armistice was signed on 27 July, Secretary Dulles announced that he would visit Seoul to discuss with Rhee a number of common concerns. From their first meeting on 5 August, Rhee and Dulles grappled with each other over a bilateral security pact. In response to Rhee's assertion that "our whole life and hope depended on concluding the mutual defence treaty," Dulles argued that it should be like the U.S. treaty with the Philippines and emphasised that the treaty should be drafted in such a way as to guarantee U.S. Senate ratification. He asked Rhee not to press the United States to add language which would not really add to the security of Korea but which would cause trouble with the Senate.<sup>18</sup> Rhee insisted that the treaty, crucially, should include the phrase that "an attack against Korea was an attack upon the United States forces," as well as a pledge of immediate and automatic war in the American draft. When Dulles protested that this would violate the constitutional provision that only Congress could declare war, Rhee vehemently claimed that "the whole thing was

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<sup>17</sup> Its threat included termination of military assistance, unilateral withdrawal of UN forces and the custody of Rhee by a military coup if he continued to refuse cooperation with the UNC or took independent military action.

<sup>18</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, pp. 1472-1473, Memorandum of Conversation by Young, 5 August 1953.



of no value without that.”<sup>19</sup> Despite this ardent appeal, Rhee gained virtually nothing from his negotiations with Dulles. None of Rhee’s determined efforts to insert automatic and immediate U.S. military involvement in the draft treaty were accepted by Dulles. On 8 August 1953, Secretary Dulles agreed with Rhee to draft a mutual defence treaty in Seoul. He worked out the details of the treaty with his South Korean counterpart, Minister Pyun, and the Treaty was finally signed on 1 October 1953 in Washington, D.C.

The Mutual Defence Treaty had two main purposes: (1) To prevent any renewal of Communist aggression in Korea by miscalculation; (2) To give to the government and the South Koreans formal assurance of the commitment of the United States in the event of external aggression.<sup>20</sup> The treaty was composed of six articles, and stated: (a) the parties involved would attempt to settle any international disputes they might be involved in by peaceful means; (b) the two parties would consult with each other whenever, in the opinion of either of them, the political independence or security of either of the parties was threatened by external armed attack; and (c) the most important point, each party recognised an armed attack on either of the parties’ territories as a danger to its own peace and security, and declared that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.<sup>21</sup>

Great Britain regarded this treaty warily because it might result in a reduction of the possibility of a peaceful solution to the Korean problem by irritating the

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<sup>19</sup> Oliver, Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, p. 427.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Commission on Foreign Relations, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress, second session, Mutual Defense Treaty with Korea (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), pp.2-3.

Communists prior to a forthcoming political conference in Geneva. Given Rhee's vehement desire to march north to unify Korea, the treaty might well be taken by Rhee as approval of unilateral activity. For this reason, the British government pressed the Eisenhower administration to slow the pace of its progress towards a treaty with South Korea. However, Britain's efforts did not lead to any change in America's commitments towards Korea as the treaty was a crucial part of the U.S.'s bargaining position with South Korea for an armistice.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. Senate approved the treaty, on the same day as did the Korean National Assembly, on 26 January 1954 by a vote of 81-6.<sup>23</sup> It provided South Korea with the protection it needed by placing that country within the United States' sphere of security in the Far East.

Its provisions were largely equivalent to the treaty with Japan, as Rhee demanded, but not to the NATO treaty, as he had asked. An exchange of ratification was scheduled for 18 March 1954, but the Eisenhower administration called it off at a few days' notice without substantive explanation as a means of applying pressure on Rhee to comply with American policy.<sup>24</sup> The final act was not consummated until November 1954. In the meantime, Rhee used pressure tactics to ask for still further strengthening of the treaty provisions. Rhee sought to obtain modifications in the language of the treaty with a view to eliminating the provision for termination after one year's notice

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<sup>21</sup> KPR, 741.14-Treaty 624/228, Mutual Security Pact, signed at Washington on 1 October 1953.

<sup>22</sup> DDE Library, J. F. Dulles Papers, Subject Series: Korea, Telephone Conversation with Ambassador Makins, 31 July 1953; PRO, FO 371 110604 FK1193/4A, Crowe to Joy, 4 February 1954.

<sup>23</sup> Department of State, Bulletin, p. 208, 8 February 1954.

<sup>24</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, pp.1769-1770, Progress Report, 26 March 1954.



and to committing the United States to supporting unilateral ROK military action to eject the Communists from Korea. He desired to modify the language of the treaty along the same lines as Article IX of the Mutual Defence Act between the United States and Japan. That article provides that the applicable provisions shall “remain in force unless otherwise agreed by the two Governments.” Rhee was informed by Ambassador Briggs, as a result of instructions by Dulles, that the U.S. could not agree to any modification.<sup>25</sup> In view of Korea’s geopolitical position, the United States prepared to withdraw its security guarantees to Korea if it recognised a need to change its Korean policy in the future. The treaty finally came into force on 17 November 1954.

Doubtless the treaty showed the U.S. intention to protect South Korea militarily against future Communist aggression.<sup>26</sup> But the treaty itself contained some limitations in terms of the extent of American military commitment to Korea. First, the treaty specified that U.S. obligation would be limited only to the event of external armed attack on South Korea. It implied that any aggressive military action initiated by South Korea would be excluded from American assistance. In other words, the United States

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As a result of Rhee’s letter of 11 March 1954, notifying that the ROK might take unilateral action, the change of ratification was being delayed pending further assurance of South Korea’s continued cooperation with the U.S.

<sup>25</sup> KPR, 741.14 Treaty-624/228, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty; NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-254, 2 June 1954.

Rhee was anxious about the termination clause of Article VI: “This Treaty shall remain in force indefinitely. Either Party may terminate it one year after notice has been given to the other Party.” On the contrary, the termination clause of the Japanese Treaty stated: as both Parties agree other satisfactory individual or collective security arrangements, it will have come into force. In reality, this termination clause made it impossible for Japan unilaterally to cancel rights granted the U.S. by the treaty. But, at that time, Rhee wanted this shackle because it guaranteed the security of South Korea without question.

<sup>26</sup> KPR, 729.13 US 1951-70/215, A Summary of The US Public Commitment to the Defence of ROK.

aimed to prevent South Korean forces from advancing north in pursuing the goal of unification by force. Second, U.S. involvement in a future war in Korea was uncertain. The provision of “in accordance with its constitutional processes” implied that there was no complete guarantee of congressional consent if the President decided to support South Korea. In this sense, American participation in another war was not automatic. Therefore, it was questioned whether the United States had the genuine will to again defend Korea in a renewed war. However, the presence of American ground forces, in particular those deployed along the likely invasion routes, provided the next best guarantee that the United States would respond immediately to an attack across the demilitarised zone. The trip-wire nature of these American forces was very important because South Koreans viewed their presence as a major deterrent against another North Korean invasion. In this instance, it was the psychological element of deterrence that was deemed to be important, both to reassure the South and to restrain the North. Whatever ambiguities it had, the treaty provided South Korea with significant benefits from American military protection. For the United States, it legitimised the continuation of the U.S. military presence in Korea.



## **The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) and the Denunciation of the Armistice Agreement**

The Korean armistice agreement established the NNSC to ensure respect for the complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed forces. A crucial role in supervising the Armistice was assigned to the NNSC,<sup>27</sup> composed of officers from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. The UNC and the Communist sides agreed to provide the NNSC and its inspection teams with logistic support and full protection, and to ensure full freedom of movement for it to carry out its functions.<sup>28</sup>

Although the Communist Command—North Korean and the PRC—had originally proposed the NNSC and suggested the four nations comprising it, they obstructed its activity in North Korea from the outset, and successfully evaded effective NNSC inspection of their forces in North Korea. Meanwhile the UNC complained that equipment replacement restrictions, based on paragraph 13d of the Armistice Agreement, had been imposed on it by the Commission, which permitted the introduction of replacement combat units into Korea only when such replacements were of the same type, model, and series. The armistice agreement provided against the possibility that ports other than the designated ports of entry might be used for reinforcing purposes. It provided for mobile Neutral Nations Inspection Teams (NNIT)

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<sup>27</sup> The NNSC was based in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) and was charged with supervision, observation, inspection, and investigation in order to ensure full respect for the armistice, including inquiring into alleged violations and monitoring the non-introduction into the Korean peninsula of reinforcing military personnel and equipment.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Korean Armistice Agreement’, The United States and The Korean Problem, Documents 1943-1953 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), pp. 100-108.

which could be dispatched whenever the Commission agreed to do so, in order to check on violations alleged by either side. The Commission and its inspection teams were unable to function unless there was unanimous agreement among members present and an equal number of neutrals operating on each side. On several occasions the United Nations Command had demanded that investigations be made to look into violations which intelligence reports clearly indicated had been made by the Communist Command. The refusal of the Polish and Czech members to agree to such investigations blocked the missions. Furthermore, the Swiss and Swedish members stuck to this interpretation of an armistice clause inflexibly.<sup>29</sup>

During the first year of the armistice, the UNC had reported 287,343 permanent arrivals of personnel and 362,122 departures, while the Communist side reported only 12,748 permanent arrivals and 31,201 departures. Communist reports on combat material were also much lower than those of the UNC. Official protests were made by the UNC about the illegal introduction into North Korea of combat aircraft, but all attempts by the NNSC to investigate the allegations were thwarted. Between 28 July 1953 and 31 May 1955, the UNC reported the movement of 16,141 combat aircraft, but the figure reported by the Communists was zero.<sup>30</sup> In this period, both parties became accustomed to violating the armistice agreement. The Communists had charged the United Nations Command with nearly 400 violations of the armistice agreement and the UNC had admitted about 30 of these to be accurate. The UNC, on the other hand, had charged the Communists with over 50 violations of the armistice and the Communists

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<sup>29</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1806, Memo by Twining to Wilson, 11 June 1954.

<sup>30</sup> Bailey, The Korean Armistice, p. 175.



had admitted only two of these.<sup>31</sup> The four NNSC members never agreed on any substantive issue and the Czechs and Poles invariably supported Communist allegations.<sup>32</sup>

The United Nations Command and Rhee's Government came to believe that the military balance in the Korean peninsula was being upset by the clandestine introduction of advanced military equipment into North Korea in violation of the Armistice agreement. To restore the balance U.S. officials in Korea determined that the Armistice provisions should be altered to permit an upgrading of military forces south of the demilitarised zone to match that which was occurring in the north. A necessary change was the elimination or curtailment of the functions of the NNSC and its inspection teams in order to ease the deployment of newly-sophisticated weapons into South Korea which had been prevented by the armistice agreement and should be inspected by NNSC. The South Korean government also bitterly resented the presence of Communist representatives in the south, whom they accused of seeking intelligence and fomenting propaganda. President Rhee demanded that the NNSC be abolished and

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<sup>31</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, 'Communist Compliance with the Armistice Agreement in Korea and the Functioning of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission', 23 November 1954.

<sup>32</sup> DDE Library, C.D. Jackson Papers, Memorandum to Mr. Luce, 5 August 1954.

For instance, two former South Korean Army soldiers escaped from North Korea on 10 December 1953. The UNC proposed a joint MAC letter to the NNSC requesting the investigation of a violation of Paragraph 51 of the Armistice Agreement by forcible retention. Because the Communists called the charge "groundless fabrication" and refused to agree, the UNC made a unilateral request to the NNSC to investigate the case. The Poles and Czechs took the view that the violation occurred in North Korea, but since the escapees were at Munsan-ni, an investigation in the South could not reveal what was going on in the North. On 22 December 1953, the NNSC informed the UNC that its request was not agreed to.



that the inspection teams, of which there were five on each side in the designated ports of entry, plus ten mobile teams, be removed from the ROK.<sup>33</sup>

South Korea raised this troublesome issue first. On 30 July 1954, the Provost Marshal, General Yong-duk Won, issued a press release threatening South Korean action against the NNSC unless its Polish and Czech members left South Korea immediately.<sup>34</sup> His action was the opening round of a campaign to oust the NNSC from South Korea. Subsequently the acting Korean Foreign Minister demanded NNSC withdrawal from South Korea by midnight on 13 August.<sup>35</sup> However, as the United Nations Command was obliged to protect the NNSC, this could lead to clashes between demonstrators and guards of the UNC.<sup>36</sup> While on one occasion the UNC refused to permit inspection of an alleged violation requested by the Communist side, citing past Communist obstruction, other Communist-requested inspections continued for several months without major incident. American Ambassador Briggs and General John E. Hull, the UN Commander, sought to restrain the ROK, lest apparent coercion hamper delicate international negotiations to eliminate the problem.<sup>37</sup>

In order for this issue to proceed rapidly, the United States consulted with the Allied countries that had contributed forces to the UNC. They agreed that the Swedes and Swiss should be encouraged to announce to the MAC (Military Armistice Commission) that because of their inability to carry out their responsibilities in the north, they would withdraw their personnel from NNSC inspection teams in both North

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<sup>33</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.11/6-2154, Briggs to Dulles, 21 June 1954.

<sup>34</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/8-154, Telegram C 69173 from CINCFE to JCS, 1 August 1954.

<sup>35</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1857, p. 1862 n.2, p. 1864 n.1.

<sup>36</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/9-254, CINUNC to the Chief of Staff, United States army, 2 September 1954.



and South Korea to the DMZ until they could be convinced of Communist willingness to cooperate. When the U.S. approached Great Britain and France with this suggestion, the Americans found them inclined towards the Canadian proposal that the UNC should attempt to negotiate for a strengthened NNSC with the Communist command. Following this, the French then proposed a compromise position which Britain strongly supported. Under this compromise the Swiss and Swedes announced that: (a) the terms of the NNSC and the manner in which they were being implemented were inadequate to permit effective supervision and thus changes in these terms should be negotiated by military commands; and (b) they would withdraw their personnel from the teams until satisfactory arrangements for more effective supervision could be negotiated by the two commands.<sup>38</sup>

The development of differences between the Swiss and Swedish Governments concerning the French plan was not encouraging.<sup>39</sup> The Swedes proposed both reduction of personnel and withdrawal of the teams to the DMZ, but the Swiss gave no support. In January 1955 the Swedes and Swiss responded to continued pressure applied by the U.S. in coordination with Great Britain and France, all of which favoured the abolition of the NNSC, or, if that could not be arranged, a substantial reduction in NNSC activities. The JCS were worried that any progress from the Swiss and Swedish governments would be delayed. The concern of the JCS stemmed from the fact that UN Commander Hull feared an incident in South Korea which might endanger the lives of the Communist members of the supervisory teams, or might lead to an armed clash

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<sup>37</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1875, Smith to Briggs, 11 September 1954.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 1910-1911, Dulles to Briggs, 8 November 1954.

<sup>39</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/12-1454, Embtel Stockholom 475, 14 December 1954; 795.00/12-954, State Department to American Embassy, Stockholm, 498, 30 December 1954.



between the U.S. and South Korea. To prevent this likely incident Admiral Radford recommended to the Defence Secretary that the UNC should “declare null and void the provisions of the Armistice Agreement which pertained to the NNSC, together with the provisions of paragraph 13C and 13D that the NNSC was created to enforce, if the Communists rejected the UNC proposal to dissolve the NNSC.”<sup>40</sup>

While the State and the Defense Departments agreed on general principles, they were unable to reach consent on a U.S. tactical position, with State favouring the Swedish slow-and-steady approach and Defense wanting total and immediate elimination of the NNSC. The Pentagon fully supported the unilateral declaration by the UNC, but the State Department objected that it was politically and legally undesirable to take action. Policy-makers were concerned that America’s action to terminate the provisions unilaterally, thereby prohibiting the introduction of reinforcing personnel or weapons, would give the Communists reason to denounce the United States as the violator of the armistice. The most important thing was that the UNC

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<sup>40</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 23, Part 2, Korea, pp. 15-16, Memo from Radford to Wilson, 2 February 1955.

Paragraph 13c of the Agreement prohibited the introduction of “reinforcing military personnel” into Korea. Rotation and replacement of personnel was permitted but the aggregate totals of military personnel for each side were fixed at their levels at the time of the Armistice. Paragraph 13d prohibited the introduction into Korea of “reinforcing combat aircraft, armoured vehicles, weapons, and ammunition,” unless it was to replace damaged or worn-out equipment, and then only “on the basis of piece-for-piece of the same effectiveness and the same type.” It was further provided in the Armistice Agreement that all reinforcement of men and equipment would be reported to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission and would be brought in or taken out only through designated ports of entry (five in each zone) and that at these ports of entry would be stationed Neutral Nations Inspection Teams (NNIT) whose function it would be to check the actual movement of men and equipment in order to insure that the reporting of both sides was accurate.



had no authority to take the action that the JCS favoured. The abrogation of the provisions had to follow the same procedure as had been followed when the provisions had been drawn up, and it had to be done in the context of the same authority--the UN. It declared that the U.S. had to be given consent by the allies.<sup>41</sup>

In response to continued pressure from the U.S. in coordination with Great Britain and France, the Swedes and Swiss asked the U.S. and the Chinese Communists to find a way to terminate the activities of the commission, and made clear that they should reduce their personnel of the NNSC substantially if this was to prove impossible.<sup>42</sup> The Communist Command rejected the liquidation of the commission, but accepted a reduction in personnel by the four nations who had members on the commission. The U.S. responded that the Swiss and Swedes should attempt to persuade the Poles and Czechs to agree to a substantial reduction of the NNSC, and in the event of their efforts failing, they should withdraw their personnel entirely or downgrade to a nominal group stationed within the DMZ.<sup>43</sup>

General Hull sympathised with Rhee's official anti-NNIT campaign, and he promised Rhee that he would refuse to permit the NNIT to visit South Korea's installations without Rhee's approval. In this regard, the JCS granted Hull the discretionary authority to do this even though it could violate the armistice agreement.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 61 D 417, Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 4 February 1955.

<sup>42</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 10, Dulles to Briggs, 27 January 1955.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-42, the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, 25 February 1955.

<sup>44</sup> NA, RG 218, JCS Records, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45) (2), 2 March 1955; FRUS, vol. 23, p. 49, Telegram from JCS to CINCFE, 8 March 1955.

The South Korean government was reluctant to abide by the American position and expressed its dissatisfaction by further delay in dealing with the NNSC problem.<sup>45</sup>

At the NSC meeting in March, these problems came to the fore. President Eisenhower realised for the first time the likelihood of a violation of the armistice in view of the dangers posed for the UNC and the difficulties involving the NNSC. Either the liquidation or reduction in size of the NNSC would be hard work if done in such a way as to avoid resort by Rhee to liquidation by unilateral action.<sup>46</sup> As Eisenhower was very disturbed by the mounting tension and possible difficulty in South Korea in connection with the NNSC, he wanted Dulles to accelerate his efforts.<sup>47</sup>

On 25 March 1955, the Swiss formally stated their unwillingness to accept a certain reduction in NNSC activities. The Swiss envisioned a reduction of NNSC personnel within Article 40 of the Armistice agreement. Accordingly, the Swiss instructed their delegate not to station all members in the DMZ.<sup>48</sup> Within the NNSC itself, the Swedish representative proposed that “the NNSC be reduced to between 10 and 20 per country, all of whom would be stationed in the DMZ.”<sup>49</sup> In April the four NNSC members engaged in a discussion of this proposal. The Swedish representative was not supported by his Swiss counterpart, and was forced to accept

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<sup>45</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/3-455, Telegram 993 from Seoul, 4 March 1955.

<sup>46</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 240<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 10 March 1955.

<sup>47</sup> DDE Library, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations Series, Memorandum of Conversation with Col. Goodpaster, 26 March 1955.

<sup>48</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/3-2555, the Memorandum of the Conversation between Deputy Under Secretary Murphy and Swiss Minister Henry de Torrente, 25 March 1955. Article 40 of the Agreement stipulated that the number and personnel of the Neutral Nations Inspection Teams in Korea could be reduced by agreement of the senior members of both sides on the Military Armistice Commission.



another proposal on 3 May: the four members of the NNSC recommended to the MAC that the number of stationary inspection teams be reduced from 5 to 3 in each of the two zones in Korea and that the number of delegates in each of these remaining teams be reduced from two neutrals appointed by each side to one neutral appointed by each side.<sup>50</sup> This meant that whereas up until then the Communists had a right to keep 10 delegates in South Korea, while the arrangement would reduce this number to 3. The U.S. felt it would still be in the same difficult position with Rhee's Government because this would still leave Polish and Czech inspectors on South Korean territory. This proposal was unacceptable both to South Korea and to the U.S. military authorities. Hence, although the Communist side in the Military Armistice Commission accepted the NNSC proposal, the UNC did not.

In this period, the Eisenhower administration could not reach internal agreement on its own position. Treasury Secretary George M. Humphrey was concerned that both the UNC and the Communists would be left free to build up their own forces as they wished if the NNSC inspection teams were to be abolished. General Hull acknowledged this apprehension.<sup>51</sup> On the other side, the Pentagon and the JCS argued confidently that the UNC should declare those provisions of the armistice relating to the NNSC and paragraphs 13c and 13d null and void. They thought that this solution would: (a) have the advantage of removing this irritant in U.S.-ROK relations; (b) make possible the modernisation of U.S.-ROK armed forces; and (c) deter the Chinese Communists from attacking the islands of Quemoy and Matsu off Taiwan by emphasising U.S. readiness to fight on the Korean front if necessary. The State Department opposed these

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<sup>49</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 64, New Swedish Position on NNSC, 7 April 1955.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 81-82, Memo from Sebald to Murphy, 4 May 1955.



considerations because such unilateral US action would destroy the United Nations structure through which the United States was operating in Korea and could be used by some of its allies of the UNC as an excuse to free them from any obligation under the Joint Policy Declaration.<sup>52</sup>

The issue was discussed at the NSC meeting in May. Eisenhower authorised General Taylor to suspend the activities of the inspection teams if such activities jeopardized the security of the UNC forces in Korea. On the other hand, with respect to the abrogation of paragraphs 13c and 13d, the President indicated that such a U.S. move should be deferred pending consultation with the UNC allies, in case such action should endanger the United Nations Command structure in Korea.<sup>53</sup> In May, high officials of State frequently asked British and French diplomats to lend their government's compliance. However, the British and French refused and, instead, the two governments suggested that the proposal by the NNSC for a reduction was the best solution, and that the UNC should introduce more modern weapons covertly.<sup>54</sup>

There was another clash between State and Defense over the issue of the NNSC. Secretary Dulles did not like the idea of blindfolding the inspection teams in order to introduce advanced military weapons clandestinely which could result in violating the armistice. Instead, he preferred a method of giving the armistice agreement a reasonable

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<sup>51</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 245<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 21 April 1955.

<sup>52</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 85-87, Memo from Murphy to Hoover, 10 May 1955; NA, RG 59, 795B.00/5-1155, Hoover to Dulles, 11 May 1955. The Joint Policy Declaration, the so-called Greater Sanctions Statement, was issued by the UN allies, who had joined in the Korean War, on 7 August 1953 following the end of the War, warning that if the Communists violated the armistice, the allies would extend their retaliation not only to the Korean peninsula but also to mainland China.

<sup>53</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 248<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 12 May 1955.



interpretation. In reaction to this, Pentagon argued, from the military viewpoint, that as long as the NNSC continued to operate, the U.S. could be faced with a violation of the armistice if the NNSC carried out its intention to perform a special inspection in South Korea because Rhee would not allow any more such inspections.<sup>55</sup> There was a wide difference in opinion between the two departments. The State Department hoped that the reduction proposed by the NNSC would be accepted in the MAC, then, the U.S. could proceed openly to introduce modern weapons. However, Defense did not want any opportunity for the NNSC to inspect these new weapons. The problem would have to be decided by President Eisenhower himself.<sup>56</sup>

For some time, Ambassador Briggs and his successor, William S. B. Lacy, were successful in preventing Rhee from the kind of drastic action which had concerned the Eisenhower Administration. On 2 August, the South Korean government demanded the withdrawal of the NNSC from South Korea and ordered the withdrawal of Communist forces from areas below the 38th parallel, including Kaesong and the Ongjin peninsula, which had been part of North Korea after the armistice. This basically stemmed from Rhee's dissatisfaction with NNSC negotiations and from his growing frustration with the U.S.-Soviet Summit meeting at which the two powers had paved the way for détente. However, the United States was truly concerned about the possibility of military action by Rhee to restore these areas. They were later relieved to receive news

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<sup>54</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-2755, Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, 27 May 1955.

<sup>55</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 120-122, Memo of a Conversation, Department of State, 5 July 1955.

<sup>56</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 61 D 417, Future Status of the NNSC, 29 July 1955; RG 59, 795.00/8-355, 3 August 1955.

of a report that General Hyung-keun Yi, Chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, objected to the retaking of these areas.<sup>57</sup>

On 6 August, South Korea delivered an ultimatum to the NNSC through the ROK representative on the MAC to withdraw its personnel from the ROK by 14 August. These demands were accompanied by planned demonstrations to suppress the NNSC.<sup>58</sup> As instructed by Washington, Ambassador Lacy and General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, the new Commander in Chief of the UNC, called on Rhee to withdraw his ultimatum and they prepared to defend the NNSC personnel.<sup>59</sup> Rhee did not stop the demonstrations, but on 14 August he issued a statement indefinitely extending the deadline given to the NNSC, and asked the protesters not to conduct their demonstrations in a violent manner.<sup>60</sup>

In Washington, State finally persuaded Defense to accept the reduction proposal on 3 May, with the understanding that the Swedish and Swiss would be requested to withdraw the NNSC completely by 15 October 1955. Both departments decided that if the Swedish and Swiss failed to take a final step by that date, the UNC should act at once to terminate NNSC activities within South Korean territory and to limit their actions to receiving reports from the UNC in the Demilitarized Zone. After further consultation with the allies, and with the Swedish and Swiss, the UNC was authorised

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<sup>57</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/11-955, Subject: President Rhee, 9 November 1955; FRUS, vol. 23, p. 181, no.4.

<sup>58</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 134-137, Lacy to the State Department, August 4 and 6 August 1955.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 138-139, Lemnitzer to the Department of Army, 8 August 1955; ibid., pp. 139-140, Lemnitzer to the JCS, 9 August 1955.

<sup>60</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/8-1455, the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, 14 August 1955.



to accept the proposal.<sup>61</sup> The United States informed Rhee of these steps in confidence and asked him to stop the anti-NNSC demonstrations, since their continuation would make it difficult for the Swedish, the Swiss, or the UNC to take further action.<sup>62</sup>

On 29 August, a joint letter was signed by the senior representatives of both sides on the Military Armistice Commission, informing the NNSC that there were no objections to completing the reduction. This was accomplished by early September. Meanwhile, the Swedish and Swiss tried to negotiate with the Communists to make a removal of the NNSC personnel from South Korea. The Swiss were far more reluctant to take a step towards the total abolition of the NNSC than the Swedish. The Swiss government asked the United States not to push for the termination of the NNSC since it would be difficult for them as a neutral nation to comply with such a request without a sound legal basis.<sup>63</sup> There was no possibility of concluding the termination of the NNSC by the deadline date of 15 October because the Communist members of the NNSC would not relinquish the right to maintain inspection teams. None of the NNSC members wanted to withdraw from South Korea under duress imposed by either the ROK or the U.S.

Though Defense did not want to alter the deadline, they finally agreed to postpone the date for unilateral UN Commander's action to 1 January 1956. It was the State Department who had emphasised the damage to U.S. public position, if the United States was responsible for violating the Armistice Agreement. Furthermore, State was concerned that while the UN General Assembly was still in session, the United States'

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<sup>61</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/8-1955, Termination of NNSC Activities in the ROK, 24 August 1955; 795.00/8-2665, A Summary of Discussion with the Sixteen Countries, 26 August 1955.

<sup>62</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 154, no. 2.

unilateral action would be criticized by many countries, besides the Communist nations.<sup>64</sup> This deadline was later postponed again. Although Rhee was by no means satisfied with the NNIT reductions, he had no choice but to postpone his deadline. In separate visits on 7 December, Secretary of the Army Wilber M. Brucker, supported by General Lemnitzer and Under Secretary of the Army Hugh M. Milton, and Congressman Clement J. Zablocki, in turn supported by a Congressional group which included Walter H. Judd and Robert C. Byrd, had urged Rhee not to continue the anti-NNIT campaign. Zablocki, Chairman of the Far East Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the other members of his subcommittee, who were in Seoul as part of a tour of the Far East, succeeded in winning from Rhee a promise to try to stop the demonstrations for 3 months to allow the U.S. to promote a solution.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, the modern weapons issue was a matter of much urgency for the American military side. At the end of 1955 the U.S. military leaders considered an introduction of new weapons into South Korea. They wanted to dispatch all-weather jet fighters to offset jet aircraft infiltrated into North Korea, and to bring new tanks and new types of artillery. To do this they needed the NNIT out of South Korea. The UN Commander stressed a single action of suspending relevant paragraphs of the Armistice Agreement in order to expedite weapons modernisation and the dissolution of the NNSC. He doubted the Swedish and Swiss would accomplish their goals within the next few months. In addition, he emphasised the need to possess an atomic delivery

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<sup>63</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/9-155, Telegram from Bern, Ambassador Willis to Dulles, 1 September 1955.

<sup>64</sup> DDE Library, Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations Series, Box 1, Dulles-Robertson, 7 October 1955; FRUS, vol. 23, pp.171-174, Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, 10 October 1955.



capability into Korea. However, State did not agree because they favoured less extreme action, in which paragraph 13d should be reinterpreted voluntarily.<sup>66</sup> The Swedish Foreign Office raised the same point that the removing of the NNIT from South Korea based on a desire to introduce modern weapons would violate the Armistice.<sup>67</sup>

Though the modern weapons problem was a separate one from that of the NNSC, the two were interrelated. In many State-JCS meetings, this was one of the hottest issues. There was a tactical problem of whether to combine the two problems or handle them separately. The U.S. Embassy in Seoul reversed its previous position, and supported Lemnitzer's proposal to carry out both concurrently. Their reversal was based on a number of considerations including: (a) Rhee's impatience was becoming critical since he had been given assurance of the dissolution of the NNSC from the U.S. more than 18 months before; and (b) the Swiss and the Swedes could not be expected to dispose of the NNSC problem in a satisfactory way by 10 March 1956, by which date Rhee's 90 day suspension of demonstrations would be over.<sup>68</sup>

By the spring of 1956 it had become apparent to all that the NNSC was not able to carry out its work effectively. The Swedes and the Swiss were committed to the policy of withdrawing the inspection teams and endeavored to get communist agreement. However, the Chinese Communist and the Poles counterproposed that the NNIT ought to be reduced from three to one in each Zone and that the mobile teams and

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<sup>65</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 195, no. 2.

<sup>66</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/12-28455, Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, 28 December 1955; FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 209-213, CINCUNC to the Department of the Army, 30 January 1956.

<sup>67</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/1-2456, from Stockholm, John M. Cabot to Robertson, 24 January 1956.

<sup>68</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/2-356, Strom to the Department of State, 3 February 1956.

other NNSC personnel in the DMZ be substantially reduced.<sup>69</sup> The Swedes and the Swiss rejected the Communist counterproposal, and stood firm on their proposal.<sup>70</sup> The Pentagon was again irritated by the uncertainty caused by the prolonging of the negotiations. However, the State Department had never pressed Sweden and Switzerland to issue an ultimatum to the Communists. To do so, they thought, would be counterproductive.<sup>71</sup>

Soon, a new problem arose. On 9 April 1956, a Chinese Communist note was received by the British representative in Peking for transference to all governments of the UNC. China proposed an international conference on foreign troop withdrawal and peaceful Korean unification. The note indicated, in reality, that the NNSC problem could not be solved until these problems were also solved.<sup>72</sup> While the allies gathered to discuss the Chinese proposal, contrasting opinions disappointed the U.S.<sup>73</sup> Faced with the Chinese proposal of 9 April, Sweden and Switzerland wanted the U.S. to support the Communist counterproposal of January 1956, which was to reduce the NNIT to one team each in North and South Korea. However, the United States believed that the counterproposal would not eliminate existing problems with the NNSC, and would even create new problems.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp.207-209, Robertson to Gray, 30 January 1956.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 229-231, Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, 8 March 1956.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 221-223, Gray to Robertson, 9 February 1956; NA, RG 59, 795.00/2-1356, 13 February 1956; 795.00/2-956, 15 February 1956.

<sup>72</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/4-1256, Chinese Communist Note on the NNSC and Korean Issue, 12 April 1956; Department of State, Bulletin, P. 970, 11 June 1956.

<sup>73</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/4-3056, Chinese Communist Note on Korea, 30 April 1956

<sup>74</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 255, Dulles to the Embassy in Sweden, 1 May 1956.



Rhee's Government strongly asserted again that the NNSC should be dissolved, and that the proposal to withdraw the NNIT to the demilitarised zone was unacceptable. The State Department warned South Korea that it would meet with irrevocable opposition among the allies.<sup>75</sup> Complete agreement on NNSC action was blocked primarily by the desire of France and the British Commonwealth countries for an interval between the announcement in the MAC and the actual removal of inspection teams from South Korea for the purpose of assessing the Communist reaction.<sup>76</sup> In the end, the British transmitted an agreed note on 28 May on behalf of the governments of the UNC. It rejected the Chinese proposal, and pointed out that the activities of Czech and Polish members of the NNSC in South Korea were an inequitable burden on the UN side, since the Communists had completely frustrated any effective supervision in North Korea. The UNC acted on 31 May by notifying that they would "provisionally suspend the NNSC activities and the NNSC would be moved to the DMZ in seven days."<sup>77</sup>

On 2 June, the Chinese promptly responded that they were ready to accept the Swedish proposal of March 16 for withdrawal of the NNIT under the condition that they reserved the right to dispatch mobile inspection teams as needed. The British considered this acceptable in principle, and asked the U.S. to agree to the proposal. The U.S. declined the suggestion firmly because the proposal did not cure the defect with the operation of the NNSC and NNIT which was the primary reason for U.S. and South Korea's action. A few days later, the British asked the removal to be

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262, no. 8, 4 May 1956.

<sup>76</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/5-756, Korean Briefing Meeting, 4 May 1956; 795.00/5-2356, Memo, Second Korean Briefing Meeting in 16 May and 23 May 1956.

accomplished on a voluntary basis rather than by the UNC. The French government was also concerned over the hasty decision to proceed with the removal, and maintained that the action should be postponed. The United States declined both requests because it did not want to change the schedule for removal of the NNSC. This resolute refusal stirred the NNSC members, and, after discussion within the NNSC, all of the members of the NNSC agreed and informed the MAC of a provisional withdrawal to the DMZ with no change in the legal status of the NNSC on 5 June.

At the 72nd meeting of the MAC on 7 June, North Korean and Communist Chinese representatives agreed to it, provided that the NNSC retained the authority to dispatch mobile teams as necessary. The UNC refused to accept the conditions for agreement, and the meeting was adjourned on the UNC representative's declaration that the UNC intended to effect the withdrawal as announced on 31 May. On 9 June 1956, the UNC removed the 16 remaining NNSC personnel from South Korea to Panmunjom without incident.<sup>78</sup> North Korea was furious about the suspension of the operations of the pro-Communist nations' inspection teams, and strongly denounced the UNC action as an open declaration of plans for large scale war preparation by the United States that could not hide extensive truce violations from the eyes of the inspection teams.<sup>79</sup>

Whereas the State Department preferred a gradual approach to modernisation, the Defense Department favoured prompt and straightforward action on both the NNSC

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<sup>77</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 273-274, the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea, 1 June 1956.

<sup>78</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-656, the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, 6 June 1956; RG 59, NA Files, lot 59 D 407, Lemnitzer to Gray, 7 June 1956; RG 59, 795.00/6-856, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 June 1956; 795.00/6-956, the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, 9 June 1956.



and weapon limitations. State argued that soon after the NNIT was expelled from the area under the control of the UNC, the introduction of new weapons for U.S. forces should start under the liberal interpretation of paragraph 13d.<sup>80</sup> The U.S. military decided that the 1st July should be the target date for favorable action on Paragraph 13d. State agreed and State and Defense determined that this matter should not be raised formally with allies because of the likelihood of leaks by them.<sup>81</sup> As some adverse reaction was anticipated, the problem of the interpretation of 13d had not been discussed with the allies. Eventually, the British government apprehended the introduction of new military equipment into Korea, and asked the U.S. to prevent Rhee's precipitate action to unify Korea by force under this favorable situation.<sup>82</sup>

For a time State officials aired their complaint that the replacement of obsolete weapons, they thought, could be effected through a reasonable interpretation of paragraph 13d, but amazingly the Defense Department and the JCS had a plan to introduce atomic weapons that would cause a serious problem, even though such equipment would be supplied to U.S. forces around the world.<sup>83</sup> The JCS reacted strongly to the State Department plan and asked Ambassador Dowling and General Lemnitzer about certain procedural and timing details regarding the introduction of modern weapons. The JCS expressed their concern that the modernisation plan had not been authorised despite the fact that the NNIT had been removed to the DMZ. They argued that the need for modernisation of the UNC equipment including an atomic

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<sup>79</sup> Nodong Sinmun [The Labour Newspapers], Pyongyang, 11 June and 14 June 1956.

<sup>80</sup> NA, RG 59, 711.5611/5-256, New Weapons for our Forces in Korea, 3 May 1956.

<sup>81</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 61 D 417, State-JCS Meeting, 23 May 1956.

<sup>82</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 289-290, Memo between de la Mare and Parsons, 3 July 1956.



capability was sufficiently critical to justify positive action without delay, and that under a broad interpretation, such action could be taken without reporting to the NNSC.<sup>84</sup>

At a State-Defense meeting in September 1956, the military side stood firm in support of their point. In particular, Admiral Radford, Chairman of the JCS, bluntly maintained the military plan to introduce atomic weapons into Korea. The JCS's claim was that reducing the cost of the US military commitment in Korea and reducing either the South Korean forces or the American contingent were inseparable from the question of modernizing the forces in Korea with atomic weapons. Accordingly, State and Defense lawyers were entitled to decide what items could be introduced under a liberal interpretation of the paragraph, and in what manner the U.S. should report such weapons. After due consideration, the lawyers determined that the UN forces could move in anything they wanted to with the exception of dual capability weapons--the 280 mm gun, the Honest John missile, and Nike. Concerning the reporting issue, the NNSC would receive a report in general terms.<sup>85</sup> Subsequently the State Department maintained, in the absence of concrete evidence of the Communists' atomic capability in North Korea, that the dual conventional-nuclear capability weapons were not legally permissible.<sup>86</sup> State understood the military stance but, at the same time, also that the political disadvantages of such a course of action were greater than the military

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<sup>83</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/8-2256, Introduction of Modern Combat Equipment into Korea, 22 August 1956.

<sup>84</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 59 D 476, Memo, Hemmendinger to Robertson, 11 September 1956.

<sup>85</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 305-309, State-Defense Meeting, 11 September 1956. Until now the United States Government has classified the text which related directly to nuclear weapons in Korea. The weapons mentioned above were followed by classified lines.

<sup>86</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.56/10-356, Introduction of Modern Combat Equipment into Korea, 3 October 1956.



advantages. It took the position that the introduction of these weapons would produce serious adverse reactions against the U.S. throughout the world, and that the Communists would have an opportunity to abrogate the armistice.<sup>87</sup> In response, the JCS pointed out that the charge of causing a breach with Communists should not deter the United States from moving because such a charge was probable if they modernized at all, regardless of dual capacity weapons. There was no compromise between the two powers in the Eisenhower administration.<sup>88</sup>

Following the Korean War, the Defense Department was very anxious to reduce the volume of expenditure of one and a quarter billion dollars per year in Korea. That is the reason why Defense longed to place the most modern weapons in Korea. Defense doubted the willingness of the ROK to reduce the number of active divisions unless 280 mm guns and the Honest John missile, which are capable of delivering tactical nuclear weapons, were included in the U.S. modernisation programme.<sup>89</sup> At last, the Defense view predominated. The United States devoted itself to gaining the support of the British Commonwealth and other members of the UNC for a public announcement of the suspension of paragraph 13d. They agreed to the suspension on the condition that the UNC should continue to support the armistice as a whole and to observe the cease-fire.<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, at a press conference on 14 May, Dulles announced the introduction of 'more modern and effective' weapons, and Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson boosted these statements, indicating that dual capability weapons were included.

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<sup>87</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 359, Sebald to Murphy, 5 December 1956.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp.360-363, Gray to Wilson, 6 December 1956.

<sup>89</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 318<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 4 April 1957.

<sup>90</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-557, Modernisation of United States Forces in Korea, 5 June 1957.



President Rhee praised the U.S. decision to modernize its arsenal in South Korea as a bold stroke against the Communists.<sup>91</sup>

Following the paragraph's cancellation the U.S. had a free hand to send modern hardware to the U.S. army and to ROK forces, whereupon both North and South Korea began to reinforce their supplies of armaments. The senior UNC members made a statement in a MAC meeting on 21 June 1957 that the UNC considered itself relieved from the obligation under paragraph 13d.<sup>92</sup> This irritated the Communists. Although truce violations by both sides were no longer secret, the overt action taken by the U.S. must have increased North Korea's misgivings about the military balance in Korea. The UNC unilaterally abrogated sub-paragraph 13d of the Korean armistice agreement which prohibited reinforcing troops and combat materiel in Korea.<sup>93</sup> The declaration touched the central part of the armistice agreement. North Korea's reaction to the decision was violent, and North Korea even expressed its fear that the American decision could lead to total abrogation of the armistice provisions. North Korea was particularly alarmed by the subsequent American decision to equip their units in Korea with sophisticated modern weapons, and denounced it as a preparatory step for atomic war and for continued occupation of South Korea. The representatives of the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers responded by denouncing the statement as an attempt "to wreck the armistice agreement and turn South Korea into an

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<sup>91</sup> Department of State, Bulletin, 3 June 1957, pp. 894-901; FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 432-433, Editorial Note.

<sup>92</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Administrative Subseries, United Nations Command Statement of 21 June 1957 to the Military Armistice Commission at Panmunjom, 21 June 1957.

<sup>93</sup> New York Times, 21 June 1957.



American base of atomic warfare.”<sup>94</sup> Although the abrogation was an American response to the Communist military build-up and was aimed at re-establishing the arms balance of 1953, North Korea’s reaction was extreme. To North Korea, obsessed as it was by the military superiority of the U.S., as displayed during the Korean War, even a defensive measure taken by the United States was perceived as an offensive act. The moving of the United Nations Command from Tokyo to Seoul on 1 July 1957, which took place almost simultaneously with the abrogation of subparagraph 13d of the armistice agreement, must have further intensified North Korea’s suspicion and misgivings. In particular, frequent references to ‘massive retaliation’ by officials in the Eisenhower administration deepened North Korea’s fear.

On 29 June, General Lemnitzer notified the NNSC that there would be no UNC reports on replacement of weapons although reporting of personnel continued. The Communist side continued to report, but the NNSC ceased to submit monthly evaluations to the MAC. Prior to this announcement, many high-level officials in the State Department reiterated their opposition to the introduction of atomic weapons. Despite these objections, there was no indication of Dulles’s reaction. He had never been satisfied with the Defense plan since under his judgment the U.S. capability in Okinawa and Japan was adequate for the deterrent power of the U.S. against the Communist forces in North Korea. The only reason he favoured introducing the

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<sup>94</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 11, Statement by the Department of Defense issued in conjunction with UNC Statement, 21 June 1957; Nodong Sinmun, Pyongyang, 27 June 1957; FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 460-461, Editorial Note.

weapons would be to bring about a reduction in the expense of U.S. military assistance in Korea.<sup>95</sup>

Immediately after the UNC declaration of the suspension of paragraph 13d on 21 June 1957, The UNC informed the NNSC that there were no reports of the introduction of new weapons.<sup>96</sup> Although the function of the NNSC had been regarded as ineffective, the United States considered that Swiss and Swedish participation in the NNSC was useful because the presence of the NNSC in the DMZ was in itself a deterrent to renewed hostilities.

## **The Role of U.S. Forces in Korea**

Shortly before the Korean War ended, the Eisenhower administration contemplated the possibility of a neutralised Korea in an effort to settle the Korean question. A neutralised Korea would require a total withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Korean peninsula. In this regard, the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned of a military vacuum in Korea that would be caused by the entire withdrawal of the Chinese forces and the U.S.-UN forces from Korea. They believed that U.S. military prestige in East Asia would suffer irrecoverably: with Chinese forces withdrawn beyond the Yalu River, to achieve no more than the establishment of a neutralised Korea, the withdrawal of U.S.-UN forces would be regarded as a concession to the Communists throughout the world, particularly in South Korea and elsewhere in East Asia, as evidence that the U.S.

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<sup>95</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 62 D 1, US Policy toward Korea, 10 June 1957.

<sup>96</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 460-461, Editorial Note.



was unwilling to continue to oppose Communist aggression with military force. Moreover, the JCS worried about a precedent case of a unified and neutralised Korea, which would constitute a serious hazard if applied to Germany, Austria, and Indochina. Reflecting the fact that there was no change in Communist military objectives, redeployment of UN forces would be undesirable from a military point of view.<sup>97</sup>

In view of there being no hope for the unification of Korea in the near future, the JCS argued that a strong military posture should be maintained in Korea including adequate South Korean forces. Their assumptions were that a neutralised Korea could bring about an increase in United States military commitments in Asia vis-à-vis Communist China if a neutralised Korea were susceptible to Communist infiltration and subversion; that the achievement of a unified Korea under South Korea, tied into the U.S. security system and developed as a military ally, was not a practical possibility under current circumstances; and that, in the event of U.S. military operations in the area, the possession of bases in Korea would, from a strategic point of view, offer particular advantage to the U.S. for the defence of the Japanese islands.

In the meantime, European allies were strongly in favour of the neutralisation of Korea both because such a settlement would appear to remove an area of dangerous friction between the U.S. and the Communists and thus reduce the danger of general war and because the creation of a strong U.S. position in South Korea would result in a drain of U.S. resources which otherwise would be available for investment elsewhere.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 6, NSC 157, 'U.S. Objective with respect to Korea following an Armistice', 25 June 1953.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 6, The Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 30 June 1953.

Pending the Korean Political Conference in Geneva in April 1954, the State Department had presented the U.S. position with regard to the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Korean peninsula as an alternative to a Korean settlement.<sup>99</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff had agreed to this as part of an agreement on the reunification of Korea but, from a military point of view, maintained that mutual withdrawal would increase the freedom of Communist action. Agreement to a neutralised Korea would provide the Communists with an ideal situation in which to infiltrate and gain control, much as they had done in Czechoslovakia, because although Chinese forces might withdraw, its forces could be committed again to intervention in Korea. More than anything else, there would be a possibility that mutual withdrawal might encourage the ROK to take provocative action.<sup>100</sup>

Despite these discussions, the U.S. policy makers were confident that there was no possibility of agreement in Geneva over the reunification of Korea between the Communists and the allies, especially South Korea and the U.S.<sup>101</sup> Eventually, with the aim of curbing Rhee's hostility against North Korea, the United States maintained that the presence of UN forces in Korea could be regarded as collective security against Communism in East Asia. Despite this strategic advantage, however, the presence of U.S. troops on the front line left no doubt that if North Korea were to attack the South, the U.S. would view this as equivalent to an attack on itself and would become involved in another war.

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<sup>99</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 36, 6 September 1953.

<sup>100</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 171<sup>st</sup> NSC Meeting, 'U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea', 18 November 1953.

<sup>101</sup> DDE Library, J. F. Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations Series, Box 2, 22 March 1954.



## **(i) Force Levels and Redeployment**

In contrast to the Truman administration, which in the aftermath of North Korea's attack on South Korea in June 1950 had made an effort to strengthen the western world's capacity for non-nuclear military responses to communist aggression, Eisenhower and Dulles moved quickly to reverse this emergent non-nuclear emphasis in western strategy and defence.<sup>102</sup> They announced, upon the inception of the new administration, that U.S. efforts to contain the expansion of 'global monolithic communism' would be grounded in the de facto strategy of the early years of Truman's presidency: communist aggression, whether nuclear or not, would be deterred by the threat to employ nuclear weapons against the power centres—Moscow and Peking—of the communist world. One principal difference between the nuclear retaliatory postures of the Eisenhower and early Truman administration, of course, was the presumption of the former that there were now essentially two power centres to be deterred. The range of possible aggressive acts that nuclear weapons would be called upon to deter was expanded under Eisenhower as well, both geographically and in terms of the intensity of possible provocations. Under Truman, U.S. threats to introduce nuclear weapons into a conflict were reserved primarily for the possibility of overt Soviet aggression against

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<sup>102</sup> David N. Schwartz, 'A Historical Perspective', in John D. Steinbruner and Leon V. Sigal, Alliance Security: NATO and the No-First-Use Question (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1983), p. 6.

This trend was especially apparent within the newly-formed NATO alliance. Truman had dispatched approximately five divisions of American troops to West Germany in parallel with his administration's decision to intervene on behalf of the South Koreans. In 1952, NATO adopted the so-called Lisbon force goals, which called for a conventional rearming of Western Europe that would make ninety-six active and reserve divisions available in the event of Soviet aggression against NATO.



Western Europe, as underscored by Truman's decision to fly a squadron of atomic-capable B-29 bombers to England at the height of the 1948 Berlin Crisis.

During Eisenhower's presidency, however, nuclear deterrence was viewed as a cost-effective, credible deterrent to a wide variety of possible communist challenges, ranging from communist or communist-supported insurgencies in developing regions of the world, to low-intensity probing actions by either Moscow or Peking around the periphery of communist Eurasia, to a major non-nuclear attack upon the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>103</sup> Eisenhower's growing reliance on nuclear bombs also grew out of his determination to cut back government spending. He feared that military spending on the level of Truman's \$50 billion annually would set off a terrible inflation and ruin the economy.<sup>104</sup> In two years Eisenhower reduced Truman's military budget by nearly one-third to about \$34 billion. His reliance on nuclear armaments to accomplish this reduction soon became evident as he allowed the development of the B41 bomb of over 20 megatons, or the equivalent of 400 Hiroshima-type bombs. The size of the nation's nuclear stockpile doubled between 1953 and 1955, while new, huge B-52 bombers rolled off assembly lines to deliver the weapons. Eisenhower was prepared to consider starting a nuclear war if necessary.<sup>105</sup>

During the 1952 presidential campaign, Eisenhower promised to terminate the Korean War, cut the budget, and reduce taxes. When he took office, he inherited a large

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<sup>103</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 127-197.

<sup>104</sup> Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1984 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pp.154-155.

<sup>105</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, Analysis of Alsop Column of 22 February 1954, 'Defense New Look and New Weapons', 23 February 1954.



budget deficit from Truman. The federal budget was estimated to be \$4 billion in the red in the fiscal year (FY) 1953, with a larger deficit of \$9.9 billion in 1954.<sup>106</sup> The Eisenhower administration formulated a new basic national policy—the ‘New Look’. Eisenhower asserted in his meeting with Congressional leaders on 29 April 1953 that the dual perils facing his administration were the external threat of world communism and the internal danger of a weakened American economy.<sup>107</sup> To meet these two concerns became the essential objectives of the Eisenhower administration’s national security policy. Eisenhower thought that U.S. national security policy had aimed too much toward building up the military strength of the free world ready for the Soviet Union’s global aggression. The military security policy, in his view, evoked unnecessary military expenditures and overshadowed everything else.<sup>108</sup> He believed that it was impossible for America and its allies to build up massive military strength around the Communist countries.

This emphasis on economic stability, for instance by budget cutting, necessitated the development of a new form of military strategy at the lowest cost. To this end, Secretary Dulles provided a critical theoretical concept for the strategy. In his speech before the National Farm Institute, he insisted that the Soviet Union “had a choice of weapons, a choice of places, and a choice of timing.”<sup>109</sup> The massive power of atomic

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<sup>106</sup> Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), P. 788.

<sup>107</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Legislative Meetings Series, Box 1, Meeting with Legislative Leaders, 29 April 1953.

<sup>108</sup> Glenn Snyder, ‘The New Look of 1953’, in Warner R. Schilling, ed., Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 400-406.

<sup>109</sup> DDE Library, John Foster Dulles Papers, Foreign Policy and National Welfare, 16 February 1952.



weapons did not cost any extra money, and could protect other free nations. Massive atomic capability thus became a major feature of the strategy. The main rationale for reliance on atomic weapons was to save expensive manpower in war. On 29 April 1953, Eisenhower ordered cuts in the manpower of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The Army would be reduced by 87,000 to 1,423,000. The Navy and Marine Corps were to be reduced by 58,000 to 981,870. An overall reduction of 145,000 was to be cut from the active divisions at the beginning of 1953.<sup>110</sup>

NSC 162/2 reflected the New Look precisely by stating that in the face of the Soviet threat, United States security “with emphasis on adequate offensive retaliatory strength and defensive strength...must be based on massive atomic capability.”<sup>111</sup> Saki Dockrill briefly summarises the concepts of the New Look as follows: (a) the U.S. military should adopt the concept of the long haul in its strategic planning, thereby abandoning NSC-68’s forecast that the U.S. faced a specific year of maximum danger from Communist aggression; (b) American forces worldwide must be substantially reduced, and a local nation’s defence secured without jeopardising its economic stability or undermining its fundamental values and institutions; (c) the United States should be prepared, if necessary, to threaten to use or actually use its nuclear arsenal either to deter or, failing this, to counter Communist aggression; and (d) the United States should rely more on collective security in the future.<sup>112</sup> In coping with local aggressions, indigenous forces were a critical defensive power with U.S. military

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<sup>110</sup> Snyder, ‘The New Look of 1953’ p. 416.

<sup>111</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Box 6, NSC 162/2, Basic National Security Policy, 30 October 1953.

<sup>112</sup> Saki Dockrill, Eisenhower’s New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-61 (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 2.



assistance, economic defence support and logistic support, and aided by mobile U.S. forces. To satisfy this policy, alliances were given high priority in the Eisenhower administration's New Look policy. For this reason, Washington endeavored to expand beyond the NATO and Japanese base and look for broader alliances in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and East Asia.<sup>113</sup> The reduction in manpower included redeploying more U.S. forces from overseas towards the U.S., reducing overseas indigenous forces supported by U.S. military assistance, and persuading U.S. allies to place more reliance on American retaliatory capability to protect them from attack. In local wars, the United States should not play a major military role and U.S. support to its allies should come from U.S. naval and air forces.

Following the signing of the Korean armistice agreement, the Eisenhower administration made a decision to redeploy the greater volume of its forces outside of Korea, while strengthening South Korean forces and attempting to persuade other allies to leave their forces in the UNC. Later it was not practical to maintain a vigorous campaign to secure additional armed forces from other UN members for service in Korea in view of the armistice and the redeployment of U.S. divisions. However, the withdrawal of most of the U.S. forces from Korea clearly reduced its potential ability to use forceful measures within Korea to prevent the ROK from taking unilateral action, if such orders were issued. Concurrently, ROK potential for unilateral action would increase, since it was no longer practical to restrict supplies to the ROK of material and ammunition so drastically as in the past. Nevertheless, the agreed Minute in July 1954 created a situation in which it was less probable that South Korea would take unilateral

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<sup>113</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 209<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5 August 1954.

action because South Korea promised to accept 'Operational Control' by the UNC in return for U.S. responsibility for defending South Korea.<sup>114</sup>

The United States maintained a basic policy that the presence of the UN forces in Korea had to be regarded as a collective security measure against the Communists in Asia. Contrary to this, most of the Commonwealth countries wished to terminate their military involvement as quickly as possible. By November 1953, the Eisenhower administration was seeking to reduce its defence budget. Consequently, the use of tactical nuclear weapons was favoured by the military as an alternative to the massive and expensive military involvement required if hostilities resumed. The State Department, however, was concerned that the use of atomic weapons would provoke an adverse response from the allies, especially from Great Britain and France.<sup>115</sup> At the Bermuda Conference in December 1953, Churchill opposed the use of atomic weapons, and expressed his concern about the possibility of a counterattack by the Soviet Union in Europe if the U.S. employed nuclear weapons against China in the event of hostilities.<sup>116</sup>

In the middle of 1954, The Eisenhower administration had to confront two basic problems. The first of these arose from the fact that the U.S. did not have an adequate defence against Communist expansion by means other than war. Coping with the Soviets' preference for using the methods of civil war and subversion, the United States had no adequate answer in purely military terms. The second problem derived from the

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<sup>114</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 50, 2 December 1954.

<sup>115</sup> NA, RG 218, JCS 1776/408, The current situation in Korea, 17 November 1953.

<sup>116</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 174<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 10 December 1953 and 179<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 8 January 1954.



growing danger of atomic war. In light of this, whereas the British 'soft policy' was gaining prestige and acceptance, the U.S. 'tough policy' was unpopular throughout the free world. President Eisenhower admitted this but claimed that "South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, and Greece would go along with the U.S. policy."<sup>117</sup>

In 1954, the Eisenhower administration confirmed that a further withdrawal of U.S. forces should proceed because half of the Chinese Communist armies had been pulled out of North Korea and because of the further build-up of South Korean forces. Moreover, Japan had finally agreed to build up its own military strength, and the U.S. were developing indigenous forces in Formosa and Indochina. Instead of redeployment of U.S. ground forces, Eisenhower directed that the U.S. should keep naval and air power up to full strength around the periphery of South Korea.<sup>118</sup> However, the Western allies' reaction to a further redeployment of U.S. forces became a delicate and complicated problem. Secretary Dulles and his own advisors in the Department of State shared a feeling that a reduction would have bad political consequences even though it represented an increase in U.S. strength on an overall basis.<sup>119</sup>

As anticipated by Dulles, the announcement of the proposed withdrawal of two U.S. divisions from South Korea provoked the British Commonwealth countries' decision to seek to withdraw their forces.<sup>120</sup> The British Foreign Office took a slightly different view on force reduction. They maintained that although military and financial

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<sup>117</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 204<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Tentative Guidelines under NSC 162/2 for FY 1956, 24 June 1954.

<sup>118</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Legislative Meeting Series, 1 May 1954.

<sup>119</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 208<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 'Redeployment of Forces from the Far East-Western Pacific Area', 29 July 1954.

<sup>120</sup> PRO, FO371 110599 FK 1192/4, Chiefs of Staff Committee, 2 January 1954.

considerations were important, political factors had an even greater priority, arguing that by stationing their forces in Korea they would be in a stronger position to influence and restrain the United States.<sup>121</sup> Washington resisted any attempt by other UN forces for a similar reduction which could damage the preservation of the UNC and the UN collective defence measure against Communism in Korea after the armistice. In reality, keeping the Commonwealth forces in Korea was basically political and based upon giving political cover to U.S. military action. The U.S. maintained that the Communists thought that the determination of the allies to resist them had weakened when all UN nations reduced their forces.

The British government had long been considering scaling back its Commonwealth forces, but believed that this had to be dealt with cautiously, and wanted to avoid making any premature moves. The U.S. gave its approval to the withdrawal of a French battalion to fight in Indochina.<sup>122</sup> By the summer of 1954, however, the deteriorating situation in Indochina intensified the talks on reduction. As soon as it became clear that France was never going to reestablish its authority over the north of Indochina, the security of Malaya and Singapore, which could have been the next target countries for Communist expansion, became vitally important. Almost immediately, the concerns of the British government shifted from Korea to Malaya. Eden argued that action should be taken for the transfer of forces from Korea to

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<sup>121</sup> PRO, FO371 110599 FK1192/4, Minute By Allen, 5 January 1954; FO371 110599 FK1192/6, Minute by Crowe, 12 January 1954.

<sup>122</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 121, OCB 387.4 Korea[Armistice] (File #1) 5, 'Achieving a Position of Strength in Korea', 25 March 1954.



Malaya.<sup>123</sup> In July, half of the Turkish forces in Korea went home. Washington was concerned by this action, but assumed that some reduction in other UN forces was unavoidable. The NSC action on 29 July indicated the desirability of retaining other UN forces to preserve the justification of UN participation in Korea. In the end, the U.S. and the Commonwealth countries made a decision to reduce their forces by two-thirds respectively.<sup>124</sup>

From the beginning of 1955 the Commonwealth countries made a request to the British government for further reduction of their forces in Korea to a token force comprising a battalion group. From the military point of view, the reduction could be used to contribute to strengthening the position in Southeast Asia. The Foreign Office accepted the view of the Chiefs of Staff that the reduction from a brigade to a battalion group would not make much difference militarily, and decided to press the U.S. more firmly, although the danger of the U.S. plan to use nuclear weapons in the event of renewed aggression from the Communists was a troublesome thought. At that time, from a military point of view, the British did not believe that further UN forces' reductions would have a serious adverse impact on the interests of Asia as the U.S. had argued.<sup>125</sup>

Anthony Eden pressed Dulles at a meeting in Bangkok, later termed the SEATO Council, to get the remaining British forces transferred from Korea to Malaya to meet pressing problems in that area. Aware of their own increased commitments to the

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<sup>123</sup> PRO, FO 371 110600 FK 1192/48, Reduction of Commonwealth Forces in Korea, 15 April 1954;

FO 371 110601 FK 1192/59, Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting, 10 June 1954.

<sup>124</sup> NA, RG 273 NSC Action 1189, 29 July 1954; PRO, FO 371 110603 FK 1192/105, 14 September 1954.

defence of Southeast Asia, the Australians and New Zealanders took the same position. Dulles was far from optimistic about the probable success of maintaining the UN forces.<sup>126</sup> The Commonwealth countries made a formal request to Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to reduce their forces to one battalion group. As U.S. ground forces had been reduced from three Corps with approximately 300,000 personnel, to one Corps of 90,000, and other UN forces had been reduced from 33,000 to 14,500 personnel, the Eisenhower administration did not agree to this proposal of reducing the UN forces.<sup>127</sup>

The Eisenhower administration was concerned about this situation because if such reductions continued, the international composition of the United Nations Command would be jeopardised. It was the view of the United States that the continued existence of the United Nations Command was important to the maintenance of the armistice and to stability in Korea on account of its deterrent effect on the Communists and the assurance it afforded of united policies on the part of the free world nations towards the Korean problem.<sup>128</sup> The British, however, did not want to become involved again in Korean battlefields. The Commonwealth made it clear that their position was firm. Washington would have to come to a decision with them so discussions between the U.S. and Commonwealth Military Representatives were proposed. The U.S. accepted under the condition that it would not be implemented before the spring of

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<sup>125</sup> PRO, FO 371 115354 FK 1196/30, 5 May 1955.

<sup>126</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 240<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 10 March 1955; *ibid.*, J.F. Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversation Series, Conversation with Robertson, 23 March 1955.

<sup>127</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 59-61, Wilson to Dulles, 30 March 1955; NA, RG 59, 795B.5/4-2955, Reply to the Commonwealth Proposal for Further Reduction of Their Forces in Korea, 29 April 1955.

<sup>128</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 72, no. 3.



1956. In early 1956 the reduction of Commonwealth forces to a battalion group was conducted. During the autumn of 1956 the British government proposed a reduction in the Commonwealth forces to a nominal size, or a complete withdrawal. The U.S. were strongly against this, to them, extreme proposal.<sup>129</sup>

The Suez crisis in October 1956 had a great impact on the issue of a complete withdrawal.<sup>130</sup> Most of the high officers and diplomats of the Foreign Office were greatly concerned that adverse U.S. reactions to a withdrawal of the Commonwealth forces would be stronger than expected. The U.S. wanted the Commonwealth forces, not because of military cooperation in Korea, but because of the invaluable policy of UN participation.<sup>131</sup>

The debate on reducing the British military commitment continued throughout 1956 and by the beginning of 1957 they were getting wider support in favour of a complete withdrawal. The Ministry of Defence recommended a complete withdrawal and proposed the appointment of a liaison officer to maintain contact with the UNC.<sup>132</sup> Eventually, by way of negotiations with the British government, Secretary Dulles

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<sup>129</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 50, OCB 091. Korea (File #1)8, 17 November 1955; PRO, FO 371 115357 FK 1196/92, Minute by Crowe, 18 November 1955; FO 371 121130 FK 1193/57, Minute by Crowe, 9 October 1956.

<sup>130</sup> The Israeli attack on Egypt on 29 October escalated the Suez crisis to its peak. Great Britain and France immediately intervened on the pretext of maintaining the Canal for international control. The United States was angry about the British and French attitudes which were in opposition to the U.S. demand for unconditional withdrawal from Suez. Instead the two countries wanted the U.S. to assist with the 'UN' peacekeeping forces.

<sup>131</sup> PRO, FO 371 121130 FK 1193/65, Minute by Crowe, 3 December 1956; FO 371 121130 FK 1193/74, A. J. de la Mare to Crowe, 4 December 1956.

<sup>132</sup> PRO, FO 371 127621 FK 1192/6, Ministry of Defence to Foreign Office, 25 January 1957.



agreed to the proposal, acknowledging British financial difficulties in keeping its force in Korea.<sup>133</sup> The governments of Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand agreed to the establishment of a small liaison mission at the UNC. The mission was to operate from 1 September 1957.<sup>134</sup> The Liaison Mission finally left Korea in 1961.

The reduction of U.S. forces was a troublesome issue between Washington and Seoul. On 26 December 1953, Eisenhower released a statement that U.S. ground forces in Korea were to be “progressively reduced as circumstances warranted.”<sup>135</sup> As there had been no consultation on this matter with Rhee, Eisenhower instructed Admiral Radford to inform Rhee before Eisenhower’s announcement in order to dissipate Rhee’s likely furious reaction. The decision on the returning of two U.S. divisions to America as an initial step was delivered to Rhee on 24 December.<sup>136</sup> More than anything else, the withdrawal of three Chinese Communist divisions from North Korea influenced Washington’s plan.<sup>137</sup> At a meeting with Congressional leaders, Eisenhower revealed that U.S. forces in Korea remained at a minimum strength.<sup>138</sup> The Defense

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<sup>133</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Diary Series, The White House Staff notes No. 92, 3 April 1957.

<sup>134</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/3-2957, Memorandum of a Conversation about United Kingdom forces in Korea, 29 March 1957; PRO, FO 371 127624 FK 1192/117, Directive to the Senior Liaison Officer, Commonwealth Liaison Mission Korea, 14 August 1957.

<sup>135</sup> Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953, pp. 860-861.

<sup>136</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.551/12-1753, Memorandum by Cutler to Smith, 17 December 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, p. 1746, Rhee to Eisenhower, 4 February 1954.

<sup>137</sup> DDE Library, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 1, Conversation with Arthur Dean, 29 December 1953.

<sup>138</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Legislative Meeting Series, 1 May 1954.



Department considered unit withdrawals in 1954 which would lead to redeployment of most of its forces within a year or two. The rapid and substantial reduction of U.S. forces might adversely affect relations between the U.S. and South Korea and could lessen American influence on the ROK.<sup>139</sup>

However, the redeployment was deferred until after the Korean political conference, based on the premise that U.S. forces in Korea constituted one of their most useful trading assets at the Conference. As paragraph 60 of the armistice agreement recommended a political conference to settle through negotiation the question of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the United States were well aware that the Communists' objective at Geneva would also be to obtain the withdrawal of foreign forces. Policy makers in Washington were apprehensive that making the planned U.S. force withdrawal known publicly in advance of, or during, the conference could give the Communists a substantial tactical advantage at the conference table.<sup>140</sup> Following the Geneva Conference in 1954, the Eisenhower administration was convinced that the Communists regarded Korea as a stable stalemate. Accordingly, decision-makers in Washington proceeded with the redeployment as planned. However, Dulles and his advisors felt that a reduction would have detrimental political consequences, even though it represented an increase in U.S. strength overall.<sup>141</sup> In South Korea, the more American forces that were withdrawn, the greater impact Rhee's Government would

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<sup>139</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/3-154, Withdrawal of Foreign Forces from Korea and the Korean Political Conference, 1 March 1954.

<sup>140</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/2-2854, Telegram 841, Briggs to the Department of State, 28 February 1954; DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 192<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, 16 April 1954; FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1770, Progressive Report by the OCB to the NSC, 26 March 1954.

<sup>141</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 208<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 29 July 1954.

have. President Rhee was furious about the announcement of the withdrawal of U.S. forces because he regarded it as a sign of the abandonment of his country.<sup>142</sup>

In August 1954, during Rhee's visit to the United States, the Eisenhower administration notified its embassy in Seoul of the policy of redeploying its forces in East Asia. The Eisenhower administration planned to withdraw two divisions out of Korea even though two divisions had already been withdrawn. The U.S. decision provoked anger and despair in South Korea. At a rally on 28 September, South Koreans protested against the U.S. troop withdrawal through Rhee's organised nation-wide campaign. Simultaneous expressions of concern were voiced from Asia over the issue of redeployment. The American Embassy in Saigon reasoned that "it would be difficult to convince the French Mendes Government not to remove its force from Indochina." In Taipei, further reduction was interpreted as a sign of weakness in U.S. military policy against the Communists.<sup>143</sup>

Some Generals, who had influenced the redeployment, had different views on which country should be first for redeployment. General Hull, Commander in Chief, Far East, expressed his view that U.S. forces in Japan should be retained, and, instead, its forces in Korea ought to be redeployed to Hawaii and Okinawa, since from the spring of 1954 8 out of 19 Chinese Communist armies had been removed from North Korea. However, General Van Fleet argued that redeployment in Japan and Korea should be continued and expedited, with combat elements being withdrawn from Japan first and Korea last, accompanied by the immediate action of creating two full strength

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<sup>142</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-2854, Briggs to Dulles, 28 June 1954.

<sup>143</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1817, no. 2, from Saigon, 30 June 1954; no. 3, from Taipei, 28 June 1954.



ROKA divisions.<sup>144</sup> With the discussion at the National Security Council in March and the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in April, the redeployment of U.S. forces could be perfectly justified by the continued build-up of indigenous land forces.<sup>145</sup>

Having calmed down and realised that the redeployment of U.S. forces weakened Washington's bargaining power, Rhee, whose principal desire was for aid programmes, especially military programmes, expressed his concern that renewed Communist aggression might be instigated by US troop withdrawal.<sup>146</sup>

In June 1955, UN commander Maxwell D. Taylor favoured either total removal of U.S. forces or the retention of a token force. He believed that the withdrawal of U.S./UN forces from Korea and their concentration elsewhere in the Far East Command would free them from the restrictions of the armistice on their modernisation as well as providing a sounder strategic distribution of forces to meet U.S. commitments in the Far East.<sup>147</sup> The implications of this had to be reconsidered in the light of the possible reaction of President Rhee who, Washington's policy makers thought, could try to move to North Korea to obstruct the American forces' withdrawal. In addition, the JCS disagreed with the desirability of total withdrawal and decided that the only major developments needed in U.S. forces were the reorganizing and reequipping of two

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<sup>144</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 36, Chief MAAG (Formosa), Van Fleet to Secretary Wilson, 3 July 1954; *ibid.*, from Tokyo, CINCFE, Hull to Ridgway, 5 July 1954.

<sup>145</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 187<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 4 March 1954.

<sup>146</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 36, Letter from Rhee to Eisenhower, 31 January 1955.

<sup>147</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, Taylor to JCS, 2 June 1955.

divisions into pentomic units<sup>148</sup> with emphasis on the Honest John as the basic weapon. The rotation of U.S. Air Force units, based in Japan, into Korea was carried out for familiarization.<sup>149</sup>

In Washington, a major question was raised as to how many troops the U.S. should retain in order to justify its continued command over approximately twenty ROK divisions. At a meeting in September 1957, Donald A. Quarles, Deputy Secretary of Defense, disclosed the Pentagon's view that their plans called for no U.S. divisions to remain in Korea and no divisions in the Far East after July 1961. In response, Secretary Dulles expressed his concern that the U.S. was duty bound to keep two divisions in Korea until the South Korean force reduction was complete. The JCS objected to this plan and supported the maintaining of two U.S. divisions as a stabilising force against the possibility of a march by Rhee against North Korea. The Eisenhower administration acknowledged the likelihood of Rhee's withdrawal of the Operational Control of ROK forces if he was not satisfied with U.S. military policy towards Korea. After a lengthy and serious discussion, a consensus was reached that the two U.S. divisions and supporting forces (comprising about 80,000 men) in Korea were about the minimum required.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Each division, smaller than the size of army personnel of current division, consisted of five combat groups, supported by five batteries of light artillery and by one battery equipped with Honest John nuclear missiles capable of firing both conventional and tactical nuclear warheads. The typical pentomic division had eighteen nuclear systems--twelve 155-mm Howitzers, four 8-inch howitzers, and two Honest John missile launchers.

<sup>149</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 61 D 417, State-JCS Meetings, 9 August 1957.

<sup>150</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 320<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 17 April 1957; White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, Special Assistant Series, Chronological Subseries, Box 5, State-Defence Meeting, 5 September 1957.



As the U.S. were confident that there was an adequate deterrent of nuclear capability based on Okinawa to defend South Korea from the Communists' attack, the fact that two U.S. divisions were stationed in Korea was primarily for political and psychological reasons.<sup>151</sup> The U.S. military presence in Korea was a political necessity, bolstered South Korean morale, and helped to gain their cooperation in supporting U.S. foreign policy objectives. U.S. forces in Korea, which had reached 360,000 during the Korean War, dropped to 60,000 by 1957 and consisted primarily of two infantry divisions. Although Chinese forces withdrew from North Korea in 1958, they were still a threat from beyond the Yalu River, hostilities had been halted only by an armistice, not by a peace treaty, and intense antagonism persisted between Washington and Peking. Consequently, the Eisenhower administration also regarded the deterrence of China as an important reason for the continued presence of U.S. forces in South Korea.

At the beginning of 1958, the Communist side proposed a peace initiative to the UNC. On 5 February 1958 North Korea issued a statement on the issue of peaceful unification of Korea, proposing that "all foreign forces be withdrawn from North and South Korea simultaneously, that following the withdrawal of all foreign forces nationwide free elections be held under the supervision of a neutral nations organisation," which had already been proposed during the Korean Political Conference in 1954, and "armed forces of North and South be reduced to the minimum within a short period of time."<sup>152</sup> The PRC communicated their support of this proposal to the British representatives in Peking on 7 February. Secretary Dulles repudiated the Chinese statement, and stressed that the United States did not plan any reduction of foreign

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<sup>151</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 364<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1 May 1958.

<sup>152</sup> KPR, 729.54 1958/152, Korean Embassy, London, to Foreign Minister, 7 February 1958.



forces in South Korea. The Chinese call for a simultaneous withdrawal was followed by the Joint Communiqué of Chou En-lai and Kim Il Sung with regard to the unilateral withdrawal of Chinese forces from North Korea and its completion by the end of 1958. The U.S. believed that this decision was primarily for propaganda purposes, albeit influenced by the economic burden imposed by the maintenance of the huge Chinese forces in North Korea.

The withdrawal of Chinese troops was apparently designed to force withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea and to gain acceptance under the terms of the North Korean and Communist Chinese regimes by the United Nations. Nevertheless, the U.S. believed that this action could give the PRC international credit as a pursuer of peace. The dispatching of nuclear weapons to South Korea led the Chinese to determine the withdrawal plan to bring pressure on the U.S. to decrease or dislodge them.<sup>153</sup>

The U.S. and South Korea were very much concerned that the other countries on the United Nations Command side would welcome the Chinese action overtly and covertly. European countries prudently drew attention to the Chinese decision which they thought might pave the way for the settlement of the Korean issue. Great Britain and France, in particular, tried to pressure the U.S. into withdrawing from South Korea.<sup>154</sup> Rhee's Government was extremely cautious about U.S. attitudes in

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<sup>153</sup> KPR, 729.54 1958/152, Korean Embassy, London, to Foreign Minister, The Joint Statement of the DPRK and the PRC, 19 February 1958. The two parties unanimously condemned the U.S. for its continued arms expansion and war preparations in an attempt to turn South Korea into a United States atomic base.

<sup>154</sup> KPR, 729.54 1958/152, Ambassador Yang to President Rhee, 20 February 1958; 773.1 US/414, Confidential no. 241, Han to Rhee, 20 February 1958; 773.1 US 1958 V.1/408, Information no. 101, Ambassador Yang to Rhee, 6 March 1958.



connection with the Communists' proposals and the reduction of U.S. forces in Korea because Dulles had instructed the American Embassy in Seoul to play a passive role in Korean unification until the State Department had consulted with the British and Japanese governments on the Korean question in an effort to make a concerted campaign to counter the Communist peace offensive.<sup>155</sup>

The withdrawal of Chinese forces was carried out in stages. The first stage was the withdrawal of 80,000 Chinese forces carried out during the period from 15 March to 30 April 1958, and the last was completed in November. When the Chinese communist forces withdrew from Korea, apparently carried out in the hope of promoting the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea, the Japanese government disclosed their concerns over the U.S. response by withdrawing its forces from Korea. Washington interpreted the troop withdrawal and accompanying gestures as part of a coordinated propaganda manoeuvre by the PRC, DPRK, and the USSR. The Eisenhower administration did not consider the Communist peace offensive as an attempt to achieve a reduction in tensions or of the military threat in the Korean peninsula. The Western allies revealed their reluctance to join the U.S. position but were eventually persuaded to follow American policy, and support the U.S. line that withdrawing all UN forces before genuinely free elections under UN supervision took place throughout Korea would be unsafe.<sup>156</sup>

In mid-1958, the Eisenhower administration raised the question of basic national security policy in this period of relative nuclear parity between the U.S. and the USSR.

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<sup>155</sup> KPR, 729.54 1958/152, Foreign Ministry to Embassy in Washington, 13 March 1958.

<sup>156</sup> KPR, 729.54 1958/152, Sang Ho Kang, Senior Member, Communist side of MAC to O.H. Kyser, UNC Senior Member of MAC, 12 March 1958; Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ambassador Yang, 9 May 1958; Proposed Reply to the Chinese Communist Note, 10 November 1958.



Until then, the U.S. had relied upon the massive retaliation principle by applying nuclear weapons based upon the New Look strategy. Thereafter, whenever a limited military aggression was to take place, the U.S. would need flexible capability so that it could determine the application of force that would best serve U.S. interests under the circumstances. The U.S. government paid attention to the development of its Western European allies' position on nuclear war strategy to defend them against the Soviets. The Eisenhower administration anticipated that these European countries would not go along with U.S. policy. Accordingly, the U.S. developed the tactical defensive capabilities inherent in small nuclear weapons, so that the U.S. could deal with limited war not directly involving itself and the USSR, but still maintain its allies and its security position in Western Europe.<sup>157</sup> In this connection, the Administration set out to deploy tactical nuclear weapons into Korea from 1958 after the denunciation of the armistice agreement clauses 13c and 13d.

The reorganisation of the U.S. forces was carried out during the 1958-59 period in policy modifications in NSC 5817 of 1958 and NSC 5907 of 1959, with a reduction of over 80 % since the date of the Armistice.<sup>158</sup> Table 1 below indicates total U.S. military strength in Korea following the cease-fire.

On the problem of forces and weapons, modernisation of weapons for U.S. forces continued, and deployment of a U.S. Air Force missile unit was to be completed. In 1960, the U.S. forces in Korea consisted of 2 Infantry divisions, 1 U.S. Army missile command (Honest John), 1 Field Artillery(FA) Battalion(BN) 280 mm Gun, 1 FA BN 8

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<sup>157</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 364<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1 May 1958.

<sup>158</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 371<sup>st</sup> NSC Meeting, 3 July 1958.



inch Howitzer, 1 U.S. Air Force tactical missile unit, and 9 Tactical Air Force units on a continually rotational basis, together with the necessary support forces.<sup>159</sup>

TABLE 1 American Troops Stationed in Korea

July	1953	302,483
December	1954	102,865
December	1955	59,910
December	1956	54,288
December	1957	56,898
December	1958	45,747
June	1959	49,420
June	1960	56,438

Source: Department of Defense, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

While the U.S. would neither confirm nor deny this, it was widely accepted that there were American tactical nuclear weapons deployed in South Korea. In order to maintain a superior position vis-à-vis the enemy, the U.S. continued to replace their forces' equipment with improved models. In this regard, Washington policymakers determined that the advantages of taking action would outweigh the political disadvantages, including the possible non-agreement of the UNC allies to such a course.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Memorandum for the JCS: US forces-Far East, 29 August 1958; White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 29, NSC 6018, Note by the Executive Secretary to the NSC on US Policy toward Korea, 28 November 1960.

<sup>160</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, NSC 6018: U.S. Policy toward Korea, 28 November 1960.

## **(ii) Status of US forces**

The term 'status of forces' refers here to the legal and administrative arrangements. Korean legal jurisdiction over the civil and criminal acts of U.S. military personnel was the critical issue. For the United States, a problem of inevitable delicacy involved the exercise of criminal jurisdiction over American servicemen abroad - a relatively new problem resulting from the stationing of large numbers of troops in friendly countries in time of peace. The U.S., of course, desired to maintain its own discipline over its troops, and to assure to each serviceman the standards of American military justice which Congress had established. To the local country, on the other hand, the exercise of criminal jurisdiction was basic to its sovereignty and an obligation to its citizens.

During the U.S. Military Government period from 1945 to 1948 after the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule, all Americans and other official foreigners were exempted from Korean jurisdiction and subject to U.S. military jurisdiction. All Korean claims arising from the occupation were settled by the Initial Financial and Property Settlement of 12 September 1948, which transferred sovereignty from the United States to South Korea.<sup>161</sup> However, by an exchange of notes between the U.S. and South Korea during the first weeks of the Korean War in 1950, the United States was given exclusive jurisdiction over its own forces.<sup>162</sup>

The United States was committed, by Secretary Dulles and President Rhee on 8 August 1953, to negotiate administrative agreements to cover the status of such forces

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<sup>161</sup> KPR, 741.24/240-1958, Supplement to the Initial Financial and Property Settlement, 12 September 1948.

<sup>162</sup> KPR, 741.14/232, Working Understanding, 29 June 1950.



as the United States might elect to maintain in Korea after the Mutual Defence Treaty came into force and to effect the availability to them of South Korean facilities and services needed for the discharge of their common task. The administrative agreements covered a number of other subjects: the use of Korean facilities and areas by the U.S.; the entry and exit of military personnel; etc.. Rhee's Government had increased pressure on the United States to negotiate a full scale of forces agreement including, in all probability, a revised jurisdiction formula. South Korea strongly desired to have criminal jurisdiction over U.S. military personnel in Korea. Once the ratification of the Mutual Defence Treaty between South Korea and the United States had taken place on 29 January and 5 February 1954, the South Korean press brought up the issue of the conclusion of an Administrative Agreement on the status of U.S. forces in Korea. South Korea wished to have similar jurisdiction with respect to other countries. Rhee's Government followed the example of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, in effect in the United States, in almost all NATO jurisdictions, and in Japan. In simplification, it provides that the primary right to exercise jurisdiction rests with U.S. military authorities where an offence arises out of an act done in the performance of duty, or where none other than U.S. personnel or property are involved. In the case of other offences, the local courts have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction. In such cases the country exercising jurisdiction guarantees the accused adequate basic safeguards of fairness by American standards. There is also a provision that signatories should give sympathetic consideration to requests for waivers in cases of particular importance.<sup>163</sup>

The formal negotiations had begun by the end of February 1954. The Korean Foreign Minister Pyun insisted on jurisdictional arrangements of the type applicable in

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<sup>163</sup> KPR, 741.14/232, Administrative Agreement between the U.S. and the allies.



Japan and NATO countries which meant recognition of their primary right to try U.S. and other UN forces for off-duty offences.<sup>164</sup> South Korea's requests were buttressed by a series of publicised incidents involving UNC personnel and ROK civilians. Although action by the United Nations Commander had reduced the frequency of these incidents, pressure on the United States to enter into negotiations for an agreement continued. Rhee's Government proposed that negotiations be initiated to cover the various components of such an agreement separately, with discussion of the jurisdiction over United States forces to be reserved for last. The U.S. sought an agreement in principle from South Korea that, although the NATO formula was written into the agreement, they would waive their right to exercise jurisdiction until some time in the future. The Defense Department was not anxious to negotiate the issue because they believed that the present arrangements with respect to criminal jurisdiction were better than they were likely to get.<sup>165</sup>

The U.S. continued to oppose entering into discussions with the ROK for a status of forces agreement, or negotiating separate deals on elements of such an agreement, because they were reluctant to relinquish the exclusive court-martial rights they then enjoyed. The Eisenhower administration determined that for political reasons, and in view of its commitment of August 1953 to negotiate such an agreement covering U.S. forces, it could do so only on the specific understanding that the agreement would not include criminal jurisdictional provisions.<sup>166</sup> Accordingly, the State Department

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<sup>164</sup> PRO, FO 371 110604 FK 1193/24, Request by the ROK for an Administrative Agreement, 23 March 1954; KPR, 741.14/232 1955-59, The Administrative Agreement between Korea and U.S.

<sup>165</sup> NA, RG 59 795.00/7-1954, Subjects on which we may have something to give the ROK, 19 July 1954.

<sup>166</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Administration Series, Box 27, Report to the President by Frank C. Nash, Country Studies—Korea, November 1957.



proposed to negotiate this and the base rights issues as well as any claims, but the United States wanted South Korea to waive its right to exercise criminal jurisdiction for three reasons: (a) the strain on ROK courts; (b) the fact that it was still technically an area of hostility; and (c) the fact that the United States already undertook to see that justice was done and reported to South Korea in all cases in which they were interested. In addition, some members of Congress and groups in the United States expressed opposition to any exercise of foreign jurisdiction over U.S. troops abroad. This opposition invoked the so-called constitutional right of the soldiers to be tried by a U.S. court rather than by the foreign country where they are stationed, and appealed to isolationist attitudes in some areas of the United States.

The executive branch, who had recognised the need for, and the basic soundness of, most existing jurisdiction arrangements, had difficulty in countering the emotional appeal of such groups. For this reason Washington instructed U.S. representatives to open all status discussions with a request for maximum U.S. jurisdiction. However, quite apart from the subject of jurisdiction, the U.S. proposed to discuss problems raised by stationing U.S. forces in Korea and to take whatever corrective action as might be appropriate. South Korea did not accept this U.S. counter-proposal and in an Aide-Memoire of 20 December 1958 requested that the U.S. reconsider its position. The U.S. continued to delay their response and ignored the Korean position.<sup>167</sup> As a result, this issue was not concluded in President Rhee's time because South Korea did not have enough power over the United States in the one-sided relationship created by the considerable amounts of assistance they received from the U.S.

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<sup>167</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Operations Coordinating Board Report on Korea, 29 April 1959; KPR, 741.14/232, 1955-59.



## Force Reduction and Modernisation of South Korean Forces

In 1953 a commitment for strengthening South Korean forces was made as part of the bargaining process for Rhee's acquiescence in the armistice negotiations. The Eisenhower administration accepted Rhee's prerequisite for an armistice, and agreed that the administration would undertake to conclude a mutual defence treaty, and aid South Korea in strengthening ROK armed forces, including ground forces of approximately 20 divisions.<sup>168</sup> In his aide-memoire of 7 July, Rhee put an emphasis on the flexibility of the strengthening of the ROK Army in order to make further expansion of ROK forces possible.<sup>169</sup> Rhee thought that because U.S. foreign policy would change in conjunction with their national interests, South Korea had to maintain a maximum strength which could be supplied and assisted by the U.S., and the degree of cooperation between the two countries should be conditional on continued U.S. support. In general, U.S.-ROK relations were driven by: U.S. policies towards the struggle with communism; U.S. efforts to reduce world tensions; and U.S. attempts to achieve the peaceful unification of Korea. South Korea had vigorously protested against any U.S. actions which they interpreted as attempting to accommodate the Communists.

In the early weeks of 1954, the French operations at Dien Bien Phu met with difficulty and the Eisenhower administration considered both direct intervention and securing the support of other nations to help the French forces. Improving his bargaining power with the Eisenhower administration in connection with the Indochina crisis, and attempting to demonstrate the positive role of South Korea in international

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<sup>168</sup> FRUS, vol. 15, p. 1312, Robertson to Department of State, 3 July 1953.

<sup>169</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/7-853, Rhee's Aide-Memoire, 8 July 1953.



relations, Rhee made an unsolicited offer to the U.S. to send a ROK division to assist the French forces which were in need of military support from the United States. In return for this offer, Rhee requested that the U.S. strengthen ROK forces to his satisfaction. His motives in proposing the troop offer were: to increase Communist-Free World tension in the Far East and thereby increase the chances that the U.S. would be drawn into active military operations against Communist forces which might lead to the conquest of North Korea and overthrow of Communist China; to create additional pressures on the Communists in the hope that they might either make concessions in Korea or be provoked to new aggression in Korea; and to create publicity which would raise ROK prestige among the free nations of Asia.<sup>170</sup>

The highest levels of the Eisenhower administration considered the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal. Under political considerations, ROK participation would be a concrete step in advancing collective security measures against Communist hostilities and would accelerate the formation of a regional security pact in Asia. Meanwhile, ROK participation could lead the UN nations with troops in Korea to conclude that their contingents were not needed for the security of South Korea and increase the withdrawal of their units from Korea, thus lessening the character of UN efforts to protect the security of South Korea. This proposed action would be considered undesirable in view of the forthcoming Korean political conference at Geneva at which

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<sup>170</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 185<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Contemplated Offer by President Rhee of an ROK Division for Service in Indochina, 17 February 1954; DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Proposed ROK Offer of Troops to Laos, 2 March 1954.

the Communists would be given an opportunity to create propaganda advantages over the free world.<sup>171</sup>

From the military point of view, although it would enhance the capability of the French to implement the Navarre Plan for offensive operations designed eventually to achieve a military victory, there were some disadvantages for the United States. Firstly, the burden of the arrangements for furnishing logistic support to the ROK division would most certainly, directly or indirectly, fall on the United States. Secondly, the situation would be widely exploited by Soviet bloc propaganda as a case of United States employment of ROK forces for the benefit of U.S. imperialism.<sup>172</sup> Considering all the pros and cons of the proposal, the policy makers at the National Security Council reached a firm consensus that it was not desirable, partly because U.S. public opinion would not support the maintenance of U.S. forces in Korea while ROK forces were withdrawn from Korea for action elsewhere, and partly because the free world would react adversely to ROK participation in the Indochina war.<sup>173</sup> However, one of the most important reasons for rejecting the ROK proposal was that it might invite overt participation by Communist China or North Korea in hostilities in Indochina, thereby widening hostilities in the region. However, a decade later the United States begged

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., Proposed ROK Offer of Troops to Laos, Attachment A: Political Aspects of Proposed ROK Offer of Troops to Laos (Prepared by the Department of State).

<sup>172</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 March 1954.

<sup>173</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 187<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, Proposed ROK Offer of Troops to Laos, 4 March 1954.



South Korea to send ROK forces to Vietnam when they were involved in another civil war as they had been in Korea.

By recognising the deteriorating situation in Indochina, the Eisenhower administration discussed U.S. participation in Indochina with or without U.S. tactical use of nuclear weapons. Although there was a possibility of Chinese Communist offensive action in Korea concurrently with or subsequent to a Chinese Communist intervention in Indochina, Washington policy makers reflected upon the redeployment of U.S. and UN forces from Korea. Some of the NSC participants suggested the movement of U.S. forces out of Korea for dispatching into Indochina, but Eisenhower opposed this because of Rhee's strong demonstration against the previous withdrawal of two U.S. divisions from Korea.<sup>174</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had three alternatives for Korean forces considered to be required for U.S. military policy against the Communists. Condition A was the improvement of the present position: together with the growing potency of U.S. Air Force and Naval Air elements deployed in the Western Pacific, action would present a constant, serious threat to the communist orbit. Condition B was the military embodiment of a policy to initiate offensive action, at the earliest practicable date, and in concert with other anticommunist nations: the U.S. Eighth Army Comprehensive Staff Study calculated the mobilisable potential of the ROK Army to be 1,071,000 physically qualified males between the ages of 19 and 36. The Eighth Army concluded that the most effective utilisation of such manpower, in combat operations, would be as a 30 division balanced army of 800,000, and at the same time, additional marginal personnel would be available for functions equivalent to the Korean Service Corps and

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<sup>174</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 194<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 29 April 1954.

for the performance of other military support activities. Properly supported by the nuclear capability of the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy, this Army was judged to be capable of defeating Communist forces deployed in North Korea, and whatever additional Chinese Communist forces that could be used to augment them. Condition C was a defensive position, and assumed the restoration of stability to the Far East, on the basis of quasi-legal recognition of the present geographical status quo. Concurrently, the ROK standing Army could be reduced to 250,000.<sup>175</sup>

As part of a visit to the Far East to examine U.S. security policy towards the indigenous forces of the Far East, General Van Fleet went to Korea to carry out an obligation from Eisenhower's letter to Rhee of 16 April 1954 in which the United States would consider programmes "for the continued improvement of ROK forces, including modernisation of air force by supplying jet aircraft, and reorganisation of marine corps from a brigade of scattered small marine units."<sup>176</sup> The South Korean President interpreted the term 'continued improvement' as a commitment on the part of the United States to expand ROK armed forces, so Rhee asked for increased military assistance in line with the build up of North Korean forces. Ambassador Briggs made a similar interpretation of the letter. In contrast, the Pentagon did not consider it to mean

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<sup>175</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 2, Report of Ambassador James A. VanFleet, April-August 1954.

<sup>176</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, Report of Ambassador Van Fleet, Box 2, Expansion of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.



an expansion of the present forces.<sup>177</sup> These contrasting views would bring about the conflict between the two governments over the issue of Korean force reduction.

In his report to President Eisenhower, Van Fleet encouraged a build-up to 35-40 army divisions, based on five ROK divisions for each U.S. division in expenditure.<sup>178</sup> Admiral Radford supported the idea of the increase of ROK forces due to the fact that it was much cheaper to maintain Korean rather than U.S. divisions.<sup>179</sup> At this time, an estimate of the relative operating costs of a U.S. soldier to a ROK soldier was a ratio of 15 to 1. The comparative costs of each division of the U.S. and the ROK are given in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2	<u>U.S. Army</u>	<u>ROK Army</u>
Initial Equipment	\$87.7 million	\$19.3 million
Annual Operating Cost under Combat Conditions	\$205.8 million	\$119.6 million
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$293.5 million</u>	<u>\$119.6 million</u>

Source: DDE Library, Reference Collection of Miscellaneous Declassified Documents, Tasca's Report to the President, Costs of ROK Forces and the ROK Defence Budget

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<sup>177</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/402, The Transactions of Political Affairs from the Embassy in America, 15 April 1954.

<sup>178</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Administration Series, Box 37, 'Survey of the Military forces of Korea, Formosa, Japan, and the Philippines, and of the United States Military Assistance Program related thereto', no date.

<sup>179</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 193<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting, Expansion of ROK Forces, 13 April 1954.

Even though Rhee had already requested a build-up of the ROK army to a strength of 35 to 40 divisions with a simultaneous increase in the ROK navy and air force, this was of course out of the question for Washington decision makers. The Eisenhower administration felt that it was beyond the capabilities of Korean manpower and the economy and, if achieved, might encourage Rhee to undertake offensive action against North Korea.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, the Commander of the U.S. Eighth Army and the American Economic Coordinator in Korea voiced concern over the inflationary impact of force expansion in South Korea and about costs to the United States. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended the establishment of a 20 division-force goal as a maximum. Coping with divided opinions among decision makers, Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson thought that any further expansion of ROK forces should be justified on the basis of “political rather than military considerations.”<sup>181</sup> His argument stemmed from the fact that at least \$1 billion per year was required to operate the ROK forces under peacetime conditions and the ROK economy could not carry this burden. Consequently, the U.S. had to be prepared to meet an annual bill of roughly one billion dollars for maintenance of the presently approved ROK forces, partly through direct military assistance and partly through economic or defence support aid.<sup>182</sup> Eventually, the U.S. decided upon Condition A, that of improving the quality of the ROK forces within current force levels. Rhee had accepted the idea of having the eventual 20 division force and the political power which would go with it, but, as

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<sup>180</sup> FRUS, 1952-1954, vol. 15, pp. 1765-1766, CINCFE to JCS, 17 March 1954.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pp. 1779-1781, JCS to Wilson, 31 March 1954; DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 192<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, 6 April 1954.

<sup>182</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.5/4-1354, Rough Costs Involved in Expansion of ROK Armed Forces Cost of Initial Equipment, 13 April 1954.



previously, he enjoyed standing his ground with the United States over their Korean policy.<sup>183</sup> Despite South Korea's total dependence upon the U.S. during this period, the Eisenhower administration was never able to look forward to President Rhee's total cooperation on most issues.

From the end of 1954 Rhee continued with his reluctance to cooperate with the U.S. because of his complaint about U.S. Korean military and economic policy, as demonstrated by his delay in signing the Agreed Minute and his obstructionism in the dollar-hwan controversy,<sup>184</sup> but his bargaining power could not help but diminish compared to the situation of the time of the Korean armistice.<sup>185</sup> The Eisenhower administration could control Rhee through aid programmes, the allotment of which was crucial to South Korea's military and economic policies. In the end, an amendment of the Agreed Minute of Understanding was signed on 12 August 1955 after a long bargaining process. The minute fixed the ROK force levels at 720,000 men with 20 active army divisions, and committed the United States to supply and equip them, albeit to a lesser extent than their own forces. At this time, the armistice agreement prevented the introduction of new types or additional numbers of weapons into Korea, so that

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<sup>183</sup> NA, RG 59, Lot 53 D 413, Taylor, The Commander of the Eighth Army, to Clark, CINCFE, 9 June 1953.

<sup>184</sup> The U.S. had a significant stake in South Korean foreign exchange rate adjustments since they had a direct impact on the pricing of aid imports in South Korean currency. This affected the magnitude of the government's budget support from the sale proceeds of the aid imports, and the size of the dollar reimbursement of the UN local currency advances to the ROK government. The U.S. proposed to devalue the Korean currency, the hwan, to a more desirable level, but Rhee's Government did not agree because South Korea benefited from the foreign exchange reserves made available by American aid and the U.S. forces' advances, to finance its imports.

ROK requirements could be largely met from the inventories of U.S. divisions being withdrawn.

Difficulties were encountered very soon in fulfilling the programme. Although the minute contained an understanding with respect to the timing of retirement of active ROK army divisions to reserve status, Rhee's Government could violently object to such a shift. At the same time, the U.S. planned to reduce their security effort overseas in an attempt to cut their budget deficit. US budgetary pressures were increasingly limiting the amount of military assistance available worldwide. As a result, South Korea had no choice but to be a target country for a test case. As illustrated in Table 3, South Korea was the largest aid recipient from the United States. By the mid-1950s, the military drag on Korean economic progress was clear. It was most evident in the defence budget and in the counterpart fund. As military pay and operating costs mounted, they soaked up more and more of the counterpart funds, leaving less available for investment in civilian economic expansion.

TABLE 3 U.S. Military Assistance to South Korea

Total Military Assistance (\$ million)				
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>to Korea</u>	<u>to Asia</u>	<u>to Europe</u>	<u>Worldwide</u>
1958	331.1	688.7	768.8	2,333.7
1959	190.5	690.6	547.8	2137.1
1960	190.2	689.7	658.3	1798.1

Source: DDE Library, Draper Committee Reports, Committee Meetings-#50 through #59: Comparison of Deliveries and Programs by Region

<sup>185</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 23, part 2, pp. 9-10, Radford to Wilson, 18 January 1955.



At this time, the most serious dilemma for the United States was that while North Korean forces were strengthening their war potential, the United States was encountering severe budgetary restraints on its aid programmes, while South Korea was suffering economic recession as a result of the huge ROK forces. When the Korean armistice had been established, there had been an ~~agreement between Rhee and Dulles~~ that the U.S. would provide a two-year programme of assistance. Part of this U.S. programme involved the return of many U.S. divisions to the United States. As a result, South Korea maintained a huge number of its own forces, which became a great burden on the South Korean economy, to fill the military vacuum following the return of US forces. During the fiscal year 1954, South Korea's expenditure on national defence constituted approximately 80% of its revenues in the general account budget, or approximately 21% of Korean gross national product. For a nation with a gross national product of less than \$100 per capita, this was a staggering burden.<sup>186</sup>

In addition to budgetary constraints, major political problems should also be considered. In May 1955, Ambassador William S. B. Lacy<sup>187</sup> in Korea voiced Washington's concern over ROK force reduction with regard to the forthcoming U.S.-

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<sup>186</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Report of Van Fleet, Defence Expenditures of South Korea, 26 April-7 August 1954.

<sup>187</sup> The length of his service as Ambassador in Korea was for five months. Lacy was recalled at Rhee's request. Rhee had obtained a report that Lacy might disturb his re-election as President and a rumour that Lacy had played a similar role when he was ambassador in the Philippines. He was known to plan to replace Elpidio Quirino with Ramon Magsaysay. The Eisenhower administration expressed its discontent by leaving the position vacant for six months. Quoted from Seung Joo Han, 'The Domestic Politics between Korea and the United States', in Young Rok Koo (ed.), Han Kook kya Mi Kook [Korea and the United States] (Seoul: Pak Young Sa, 1984), pp. 138-142.



ROK economic discussions in Washington that would make U.S. relations with Rhee's Government exceedingly difficult.

As the ROK military establishment was the single strongest stabilising force in Korea and a significant factor in the general Far East situation, the issue was a complicated controversy within the Eisenhower administration. Furthermore, within Korea itself, if ROK force reductions were mandated before tensions in the area eased, particularly before the promised force goals were reached, ROK morale would be shaken, and ROK forces might be withdrawn from UNC operational control. At the same time, Rhee's political influence, built in large part on his success in getting military aid from the United States, would be diminished. Ambassador Lacy indicated the unsettling economic effects of the plan on Korean society, which was accomplished by the Economic Coordinator to Korea, in the shape of problems that would arise when those released from the army were integrated back into the civilian economy.<sup>188</sup>

The US military circle also maintained their objection against a full-scale reduction programme. With General Lemnitzer's recommendation as Commander in Chiefs of Far East (CINCFE), who advocated a stage-by-stage cutback,<sup>189</sup> the JCS held the line throughout the post Korean War period that the 20 division ROK army, plus two U.S. divisions, were crucial for a defending action against the Communists. However, the withdrawal of the Chinese forces from North Korea in 1958 would make

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<sup>188</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.5/5-3055, the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, 30 May 1955.

<sup>189</sup> NA, JCS Records, CCS 383.21 Korea(3-19-45) (2), Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE)'s Recommendations for Future Force Levels of the ROK Army, 6 September 1955.

General Lemnitzer recommended: the tentative force levels were July 1957, 20 active divisions, ten reserve divisions; January 1958, 17 active, 13 reserve; July 1958, 13 active, 17 reserve; January 1959, 9 active, 21 reserve.



the JCS change their position a little.<sup>190</sup> In spite of the political and military concerns, economic problems obviously required a reduction of the level of South Korean forces. On 8 December 1955 the National Security Council discussed the problem posed for the economy of South Korea by the inflationary pressure created by a large military establishment supported by United States aid. The participants concluded that, for the long-term solution to the problem, South Korean forces should be reduced to a level supportable by the South Korean economy. President Eisenhower was seriously concerned about having to convince Rhee of this in the near future. He recalled the hard bargaining with Rhee in the armistice and post-armistice period.<sup>191</sup>

A full-dress debate about reducing South Korea's 20 division army began in the middle of 1956. Decision-makers of the Eisenhower administration were anxious to forward the reduction of the ROK army. As illustrated in Table 4, compared with other allied forces, the ROK army's strength was weaker. Ignoring the complaint from Rhee's Government that they needed to modernise their air force, to acquire additional naval vessels and even to modernise their army, the U.S. emphasised the reversal in the direction of their spending in Korea downward. In particular, Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson, who was discouraged by the cut in the defence budget, was keen to encourage the force reduction programme, believing that there was no real way to cut US expenses except by reducing the size of ROK forces.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 262<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, 20 October 1955; FRUS, vol. 23, p. 178, no.4.

<sup>191</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 269<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 8 December 1955.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 297<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea, 20 September 1956.

TABLE 4 Comparison of Strength, Allowances of Selected Weapons and Items of Equipment of Infantry Division

	<u>U.S. (1955)</u>	<u>Japan</u>	<u>Korea</u>	<u>Philippines</u>	<u>Taiwan</u>	<u>Thailand</u>	<u>Vietnam</u>	<u>Turkey</u>
<u>Strength</u>	17,452	12,724	14,224	15,507	11,370	12,842	8,094	14,953
BAR	493	489	252	677	258	249	326	486
Launcher Rocket 3.5"	550	556	255	453		293	205	384
Howitzer 105mm	54	54	54	54	12	36	12	54
Mortar 81mm	54	40		36	36	30	60	
Mortar 4.2"	36	36	12	36	27	24		36
Truck ¼ T	1,103	781	195	792	274	394	202	1,080

Source: DDE Library, President's Committee to Study the U.S. Military Assistance Program (Draper Committee) Reports, 1958-59

The Eisenhower administration considered that such a reduction would show U.S. peace aspirations to the free world which had been bombarded with Communist peace propaganda. Furthermore, and more importantly, they were convinced that a renewed attack from North Korea was unlikely.<sup>193</sup> Until then, the ROK forces consisted of 20 active plus 10 reserve divisions, 2 jet fighter bomber wings plus 1 tactical control squadron and 1 tactical reconnaissance squadron, and a navy of 79 ships. Costs were projected at \$580.6 millions for FY 1957 and \$672.8 millions for 1958 plus substantial increases in the ROK military budget. The latter could be met

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<sup>193</sup> DDE Library, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, OCB Series, Subject Subseries, Report on Korea, 25 October 1956.



only by a further drain on the Department of State counterpart funds, to the serious detriment of the South Korean economic development programme.<sup>194</sup>

The JCS presented their view that the Communist situation permitted a phased reduction in ROK active forces and recommended 16 Infantry Divisions, 14 Reserve Divisions, 1 Marine Division, with the Navy and Air Force at minimum strength levels under the condition of the introduction of nuclear weapons into the U.S. forces. The JCS confirmed at the NSC Planning Board meeting on 22 October that if nuclear weapons were not to be introduced, there would be no change in present force levels of either the U.S. or the ROK. In response, Defense Secretary Wilson believed that a mere transfer of four divisions to reserve status was not worth all the difficulties inherent in the introduction of nuclear weapons.<sup>195</sup> Asked by the Department of State for an appraisal, Walter C. Dowling, Ambassador to Korea from May 1956, opposed the maintenance of the present force levels and supported a reduction of army forces to 10 active and 10 reserve divisions, followed by the introduction of nuclear weapons, the replacement of worn-out transport and communications equipment, and the addition of sophisticated aircraft. Dowling also mentioned the same political problems as his predecessor Lacy, and believed that the problem of unemployment of discharged soldiers was serious but manageable. He was concerned that nuclear weapons for the

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<sup>194</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 50, Major Program Commitments, 14 March 1956.

<sup>195</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 322-325, JCS to the Secretary of Defence, 11 October 1956; ibid., p. 333, Parsons to Robertson, 24 October 1956; ibid., pp. 342-344, Parsons to Dowling, 7 November 1956.

U.S. forces could compensate for ROK force reductions but would bring about clamor for the same weapons requirement for South Korea.<sup>196</sup>

The application of 'New Look' policies in Korea was critical for the Eisenhower administration. The precedent of the Korean case was followed in Formosa, Vietnam, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, all of which, together with South Korea, were given nearly two-thirds of total U.S. mutual security assistance. This commitment was inspired by a growing concern that Congress would attempt to reduce its various foreign commitments in the interest of the domestic defence budget which had steadily increased as a result of new weapons developments.<sup>197</sup> The Eisenhower administration lost a series of battles over the mutual security program in its struggle to secure more funds from Congress. Dealing with Eisenhower's request for \$ 4.67 billion for the mutual security programme for FY 1957, Congress reduced it to \$3.8 billion.<sup>198</sup>

At the beginning of 1957, the Eisenhower administration tried to evaluate alternative military programmes for South Korea in the draft NSC 5702:

Alternative A was the existing military programme, consisting of (a) 20 active and 10 reserve army divisions, (b) 6 jet fighter squadrons, (c) 1 marine division and coastal navy.

Alternative B involved following changes in converting 4 of the 20 active divisions into reserve divisions over a three-year period, providing U.S. forces in Korea with dual conventional nuclear weapons.

Alternative C involved converting 10 of the 20 active divisions into reserve divisions, providing the remaining active forces with additional limited dual conventional nuclear weapons like the U.S. forces.

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<sup>196</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.5/10-1256, Dowling to the Department of State, 12 October 1956.

<sup>197</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 343, Parsons to Dowling, 7 November 1956.

<sup>198</sup> Saki Dockrill, op. cit., p. 175.



Alternative D was the same in terms of the army divisions, and also provided 12 squadrons of fighters and fighter bombers sufficient to offset North Korean air strength; and providing the ROK Army with equipment comparable to that of the North Korean Army, but not the provision of dual conventional-nuclear weapons.

Considering these alternatives came to be more controversial in inter-departmental relations. Alternative B reflected the views that the JCS had previously expressed as their minimum requirement. In the Department of State itself, Assistant Secretary Robertson advocated alternative A, feeling that the reduction of the ROK forces might induce Communist hostilities similar to the Korean war. On the contrary, Robert R. Bowie, Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Planning, supported alternative C as the goal of U.S. policy since it would save \$165 million annually in aid to Korea, would ease the military burden on the Korean economy, and would facilitate Korean economic development.<sup>199</sup> These contrasts were more evident at the NSC meeting a few days later. Secretary Dulles stated his objection to drastic reductions in ROK forces. Defense Secretary Wilson was opposed to increasing economic assistance to South Korea by way of any savings resulting from a reduction. He thought that this would not have any effect on the Korean force reduction that Washington had desired. Treasury Secretary George M. Humphrey was not satisfied with a reduction of four divisions because of America's serious financial situation. On the whole, policy makers opted for alternative B which could be achieved by additional deployment of U.S. nuclear forces.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 390-391, Robertson to Dulles, 29 January 1957; ibid., p. 391, no. 5.

<sup>200</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 311<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 31 January 1957; 319<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 11 April 1957.

Admiral Radford, who had been one of those staunchly pro-New Look and sympathetic to South Korea in a military perspective, obviously spoke for the Defense-JCS outlook for the reduction of South Korean forces when he outlined that: (a) the introduction of nuclear weapons was necessary to deal with Rhee over the reduction programme because South Korea felt much safer if the invasion routes into the ROK were covered by nuclear weapons; and (b) the U.S. military would not continue military planning without including the use of nuclear weapons, on which the security of U.S. forces in Korea was highly dependent. He emphasised that the notification to Rhee about the introduction of atomic weapons was indispensable for his concurrence on the Korean force reduction.<sup>201</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States pressed for a reduction of Korean strength on the grounds that the North Korean army of 383,000 faced South Korean forces of nearly twice that strength plus two U.S. infantry divisions. However, Rhee's Government maintained vigorously that maintenance of the army was an unalterable must. For the South Korean government, whatever happened to the economy was a secondary consideration. Rhee believed that a military build-up was crucial for defending his country from further North Korean hostilities and possibly for making a raid on the North to reunify Korea, although this would have been implausible without full U.S. support.

Discussion in the National Security Council on 13 June 1957, concerning U.S. policy towards Korea, indicated an urgent need for U.S. action to reduce the mounting costs of the total U.S. defence effort. In order to keep a proper balance between

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<sup>201</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 326<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, U.S. policy toward Korea, 13 June 1957.



domestic and foreign programmes, the Council discussion on Korea focused attention on reductions in the U.S. defence effort overseas. Participants believed such reductions would be made possible by the greatly increased power of sophisticated modern weapons. In accordance with Eisenhower's decision, Dowling and Lemnitzer were instructed to propose a reduction of ROK forces to Rhee, in return for a modernisation of the ROK Air Force and the modernisation of the U.S. forces in Korea. The proposal was timed to coincide with the U.S. announcement of the suspension of the Armistice limitation on force improvement. Eisenhower predicted that they would again encounter delicate and difficult negotiations with Rhee, and did not want an ultimatum to be presented to Rhee even though Dowling and Lemnitzer were entitled to exercise some flexibility in reaching an agreement with Rhee. They were directed to notify Rhee, if questioned, of the probability of the introduction of atomic bombs onto South Korean territory.<sup>202</sup>

Rhee welcomed modernisation but raised objections to force reduction, remarking that "the ROK forces could only be reduced after unification of the country." Additionally, he notified Eisenhower of his objection to this plan until the modernisation programme for the ROK had been completed to a satisfactory extent.<sup>203</sup> He pressed the U.S. for more modern equipment for ROK forces, including atomic weapons. In this way Rhee took the risk of attempting to drive another hard bargain

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<sup>202</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-1857, Joint State-Defence Message for Dowling and Lemnitzer, 18 June 1957; DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, Special Assistant Series, Chronological Subseries, Box 5, Memorandum for the President: Further Application of New Look to U.S. Defence Effort Overseas, 19 June 1957.

<sup>203</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Letter from Rhee to Eisenhower, 24 June 1957; FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 461-462, Dowling to Parsons, 24 June 1957.



with the Eisenhower administration as he had done in the past. He incited Senator Knowland and Henry Styles Bridge, who had been on good terms with Rhee, to press the Pentagon. At the same time, the JCS argued their position concerning the introduction of nuclear weapons to US forces in South Korea in order to persuade Rhee and his Government to believe that the security of South Korea could be guaranteed by the weapons.<sup>204</sup> Eisenhower took a firm stance that the reduction of ROK forces was imperative for the sake of the American budget, and that the modernisation of U.S. forces, the addition of improved weapons to ROK forces, and the mutual defence treaty should be sufficient to defend South Korea.<sup>205</sup> From the U.S. point of view, the question of the reduction of ROK forces was not negotiable insofar as U.S. support was concerned. However, Rhee's Government urged the U.S. to refrain from discussing the question of force reduction until the completion of a study into the matter, then being undertaken by the South Korean Government.<sup>206</sup>

Washington's position was that, with a cut in defence support, a continuation of the present level of ROK forces could have disastrous economic effects in South Korea. It was believed that the American desire to withdraw its support of twenty ROK divisions was probably closely related to President Eisenhower's quest for savings to be used in countering the Soviet missile-age offensive.<sup>207</sup> Rhee maintained that South Korean forces should be modernised in a manner similar to the level of U.S. forces. In those days, the U.S. did not endorse such policies as equipping their allies' forces with

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 467-468, Radford to Wilson, 17 July 1957.

<sup>205</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Letter from Eisenhower to Rhee, 19 July 1957.

<sup>206</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/6-2157, Joint State-Defense Message, 22 July 1957; 795.00/7-2457, Dowling to the Department of State, 24 July 1957.



the same weapons. Ultimately, Rhee's requirement was a means for achieving his goals in his dealings with the United States. He followed the principle in this diplomatic seesaw that one should insist on much more than one wants to eventually receive it through negotiation. In this connection, Secretary Dulles regarded Rhee as a quintessential Oriental bargainer. He argued that it was going to be hard to get Rhee to agree to a reduction of the ROK forces, and "to achieve this we may have to give him a heavy jolt because he is a master of evasion."<sup>208</sup>

Although the Eisenhower administration was annoyed at Rhee's attempt to negotiate a force reduction, Rhee insisted that he would not accept discrimination in armaments between U.S. and ROK forces, and complained that he had not had any information on the type of weapons and the date of their introduction.<sup>209</sup> Rhee basically welcomed modernisation but raised objections to the procedure of force reductions.<sup>210</sup> Rhee then resorted to his now familiar demonstrations as he had always done in bargaining with the U.S. for the destiny of his nation. Rhee was mostly concerned with modernisation to compensate for the reductions. There was considerable popular sympathy for reducing the burdensome force levels in South Korea but the fundamental concern was that U.S. interest in and support for the ROK was decreasing.

In the following months, laborious negotiations lingered on with Rhee's Government manipulating every possible argument to maximise ROK force

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<sup>207</sup> Washington Evening Star, 18 January 1958.

<sup>208</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 334<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, U.S. Policy toward Korea, 8 August 1957.

<sup>209</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Letter from Rhee to Eisenhower, 2 August 1957.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., Letter from Eisenhower to Rhee, 23 August 1957.



modernisation while avoiding force reductions. Ultimately, on 5 November 1957, Rhee's Government determined force reductions of 60,000 men from the authorised 720,000 level, to consist of the deactivation of two army divisions and other units, including a Marine battalion, rather than four, as proposed by the U.S.<sup>211</sup> This decision was partly affected by the information that a cut in total U.S. foreign aid appropriations for FY 1958 necessitated a decrease in economic aid to Korea. If ROK forces were not reduced, deficit financing and consequent economic decline could undermine ROK forces and South Korea itself.<sup>212</sup> This was considered unacceptable by the United States since the actual level of ROK forces of 676,995 had always been below the authorised level, established in the Minute of Understanding of November 1954 for FY 1955.<sup>213</sup>

Acceptance of the ROK proposal, therefore, would not have resulted in any budgetary savings, which was the objective of the Eisenhower administration's decision to reduce the ROK forces, because the actual reduction was only by 17,000. A series of meetings between the Departments of State and Defense reached the following mutually agreed views : (a) the minimum acceptable plan was a reduction by 30 June 1958 of 61,500 men; and (b) Rhee would be informed that the Honest John and 280 mm guns would soon be introduced into South Korea. In reality, decision makers and officials in Washington were awfully concerned about Rhee's unpredictable reactions, as he was frequently inclined to change his decisions. Predictably, Rhee reacted negatively that "no force reductions were possible until unification was achieved," so General Decker, CINCUNC, informed Rhee of American plans regarding the introduction of the nuclear

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<sup>211</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/11-657, Joint Ambassador-CINCUNC Message, 6 November 1957.

<sup>212</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 526, Sprague to Decker, 11 December 1957.

<sup>213</sup> As the authorised level was considered important for the Korean forces' capacity, Rhee did not care for an actual level of ROK forces that would be expanded as necessary.



weapons battalions. Despite U.S. confirmation of dispatching nuclear weapons, Rhee opposed any reduction without the visible modernisation of ROK forces.

Accompanying Rhee's ardent objection, there were a lot of other objections over the Korean force reduction programme. From the beginning of 1958, in order to hamper the programme, Rhee tried to work by contacting various newspaper feature writers and Congressional leaders such as Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, and Senator Knowland.<sup>214</sup> He emphasised to them the importance of South Korea in defending Japan, which had come to be regarded as a country of considerable importance to the U.S. economy. This kind of tactics was quite successful and they accordingly used their influence to oppose the ROK reduction programme that the Eisenhower administration had planned. The Eisenhower administration acknowledged that the originally planned reduction would cause a negative effect in not only South Korea but also in such neighbouring countries as Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. As an initial step that was a compromising position temporarily between Korea and the U.S., and between interdepartmental conflicting interests in the Eisenhower administration, a revised military aid agreement reducing the maximum number of ROK military personnel that would be supported by MAP (Military Assistance Program) through the calendar year 1959 from 720,000 to a new force ceiling of 630,000 was signed on 29 November 1958. This involved a reduction in the total number of active ROK army divisions from 20 to 18.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> KPR, 773.1 US 1958 V.1/408, Information no. 14, Ambassador Yang to Rhee, 8 January 1958; Information no. 42, Yang to Rhee, 30 January 1958.

<sup>215</sup> KPR, 729.11 1955-58/760, Memo for the Minister of Defense, 'Reorganisation of the ROK Armed Forces', 12 February 1958; DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for



By 1959, the problems of force levels and equipment had sharpened: the financial constraints on U.S. aid were growing tighter, yet the equipment of ROK forces was increasingly obsolescent, while their burden on the ROK economy was even more evident. Treasury pushed for a drastic cut of ROK forces, but State and Defense opposed them. From the State Department's point of view, ROK forces played a larger role in East Asian security than simply the defence of its country. The Defense Department considered that even the most drastic reduction proposal would not save enough Mutual Assistance Programme resources to make possible the desired degree of modernisation of ROK forces.<sup>216</sup>

In May 1959, the U.S. Country Team in South Korea, which consisted of the Ambassador, the United States Operations Mission (USOM), and the Military Assistant Advisory Group (MAAG), completed a study of five-year cost projections for various ROK force levels at the request of the State Department. The survey disclosed that these savings brought about by Korean force reduction could not be realised as such because of the large modernisation requirement, estimated to total about \$325-400 million for the period.<sup>217</sup> Ultimately, the force reduction programme that the Eisenhower administration had pursued was not successful in its overall objectives.

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National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Operations Coordinating Board Report on Korea, 29 April 1959.

<sup>216</sup> KPR, 773.1 US 1958 V.1/408, Information no. 14, 8 January 1958; Information no. 35, 23 January 1958; KPR, 773.1 US/416, Rhee to Consul Oh, Honolulu, 23 January 1958; 773.1 US 1958 V.2/409, Information no.95, Yang to Rhee, 6 March 1958.

<sup>217</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, 'Korea: Estimated Cost of the Proposed Policies Expenditures by Programs', 1 July 1959.



At the NSC meeting in June 1959, there was much controversy among decision-makers concerning the settlement of this issue. Secretary Dulles, affected by these opponents, raised the political and psychological impact both in South Korea and in the Far East. Contrary to this, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget called for an effort to reduce the ROK to 16 active divisions and proposed that this could be reduced to 12 with greater modernisation of the ROK forces. The President himself also agreed not to reduce Korean forces considerably because he did not want to face the new problem of another 100,000 unemployed men in South Korea.<sup>218</sup> In this period, ROK forces were an important mechanism in maintaining the balance of employment. For the United States, they would have to consider the impact of such a reduction not only on South Korea but also on the rest of Free Asia.

As far as military assistance was concerned, by 1960 the United States had provided approximately \$1.4 billion to South Korea since the Korean armistice. American military assistance and the presence of U.S. military forces gave the United States great leverage with which to influence South Korean military policy, as well as government policy in general. However, in the last quarter of the 1950s the U.S. government could not continue to afford assistance programmes for foreign countries and still maintain a strong and healthy U.S. economy. This reduction of military assistance brought about the weakening of Rhee's political power in South Korea because U.S. military assistance had significant economic implications, combined with huge amount of economic aid. For this reason, the downfall of Rhee's administration in April 1960 was implicitly caused by this shortage of aid from the United States even

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<sup>218</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 411<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, US Policy toward Korea, 25 June 1959.

though the explicit reason was attributed to his government's corruption, malfunctions, and undemocratic rule.

By 1960 the ROK armed forces were capable of defending South Korea against North Korean attack with conventional weapons for a sufficient period of time to permit outside reinforcement. However, although ROK ground forces were numerically superior to North Korean forces, lack of logistical build-up and limited quantities of modern equipment precluded a sustained defence by the ROK Army without prompt materiel assistance.<sup>219</sup>

In conclusion, during the Cold War, the rationale of U.S.-South Korean military relations had been to contain the North Korean military threat as part of the global struggle between the U.S. and the USSR. Japan's importance in U.S. strategy since World War II made the United States regard South Korea as a front-line base for defending Japan and the Pacific region. On account of this, the U.S. commitment to South Korea was regarded as a crucial sign of American credibility with regard to its other allies in Asia. The loss of South Korea would have negative repercussions for the free world. This strategic view justified massive U.S. military assistance to South Korea. In reality, the United States committed itself to a military assistance programme for psychological reasons to build foreign confidence and determination to resist Communist expansionism and subversion.

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<sup>219</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Extracts from the President's Committee to study the United States Military Assistance Programme Area Study—Far East, 7 July 1959; Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, NSC 6018, 'U.S. Policy toward Korea', 28 November 1960.



The principal elements of U.S.-South Korean military relations included a mutual defence treaty, a U.S. military presence in Korea, and U.S. military assistance to the ROK forces. This relationship has been characterised as one-directional, in that the relationship was dominated by U.S. political and national interests. Under these conditions, the objectives of Rhee's Government were to keep a significant number of U.S. troops stationed in its territory, and to strengthen the ROK forces, albeit with necessary assistance from the United States.

The only reliable political arrangement for the defence of South Korea was the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. The formula of this treaty is fundamentally different from that of the NATO Treaty which presuppose an automatic response in the conflicts of allied countries. In other words, it means that the United States neither supports any military action initiated by South Korea nor provides for immediate action by the participating parties in the event of armed attack. Thus, from South Korea's point of view, this treaty did not guarantee sufficient commitment to South Korean security. As a result, President Rhee attempted to look to the excuse of reinforcing South Korean forces to a level at which they would have enough capacity to overthrow North Korean forces. His unsolicited proposal of the dispatch of an ROK army to Indochina was linked to this scheme.

In this period, the two countries' military relationship was not coordinated in all cases. Given the asymmetry of capability between the two sides, while the U.S. notified unilateral decisions to South Korea, Rhee ardently opposed these and took a bargaining position with Eisenhower who became tired of these laborious and painful deals. On the specific problem of force reductions, the Eisenhower administration determined that the redeployment of U.S. forces in Korea and the reduction of ROK forces to the minimum necessary to defend itself from the North Korean forces were inevitable. This



action was regarded as being necessary because of the burden that the current level of ROK forces imposed on the Korean economy, as well as the burden on the U.S. budget of being required to assist in supporting these armed forces. Rhee took the position that he could not accept the plan unless ROK forces were to be equipped with modern weapons comparable to those being provided to U.S. forces in Korea, including atomic weapons. Although Rhee was sure that the U.S. would not provide South Korea with atomic weapons, he knew he had to ask for the maximum possible from his counterpart and, then, withdraw his position to one which the U.S. would tolerate. To achieve this, he manipulated conservative congressmen and the American newspaper feature writers, who were either vigorously anti-Communist or sympathetic to Rhee. The Eisenhower administration had to modify its positions in light of these internal political processes. In the case of a redeployment of US forces, the U.S. government was much worried about the likelihood of the South Korean forces' withdrawal from UNC operational control if the redeployment of all its forces from Korea, which had been determined in the original plan, was carried out. Considering Rhee's decision on the release of POWs prior to the Korean armistice, American policy makers were compelled to be worried about a recurrence of a similar incident. In the end, the U.S. decided to leave two infantry divisions and have continued to leave the same level of forces in Korea.

As for the negotiation of a status of forces agreement, the United States opposed relinquishing the exclusive court-martial rights it then enjoyed. They argued that such an agreement should be delayed until the settlement of the military situation in Korea, where American forces had been on a virtual war footing. South Korea's desire to conclude this issue, linked as it was to the question of sovereignty, was not fulfilled, partly because nobody in Washington could agree with Rhee's position, and partly



because South Korea had used up its leverage over the United States in the course of securing the substantial levels of assistance from them.

One of the major problems complicating U.S.-ROK relations was South Korea's desire to abrogate the Armistice Agreement and have the freedom to take unilateral action to unify Korea. The United States supported the maintenance of the Armistice agreement and the achievement of unification through peaceful means. Even though this difference of policies on the principal objective of Rhee's Government had an important influence on relations between the two countries, as stability in the Korean peninsula was critically important to the U.S. and remained a main objective of U.S. Korean policy, in the end, Rhee's Government recognised that the extent of their dependence on U.S. assistance and support was such that they had no alternative but to continue their close association with the United States.

Since the cease-fire, the armistice in Korea continued as the basis for maintaining peace in the area. Continued United States efforts to impress upon the ROK the futility of unilaterally reopening hostilities proved successful, although Rhee on a number of occasions had publicly advocated marching north. There was no question, however, that he and his senior military leaders were fully aware of the futility of unilateral action on the part of the ROK under the prevailing international circumstances. Rhee was a brilliant leader in extracting assistance from the U.S. to the extent that he did. Guaranteeing operational control to the U.S., which would often raise the problem of the sovereignty of South Korea, South Korea was awarded large amounts of military and economic aid from the U.S., which were essential resources for sustaining South Korea itself following the Korean War.

In spite of enormous U.S. military assistance to South Korea's security, how could Rhee as a leader of a small state exert his continued influence over the Eisenhower administration? Notwithstanding South Korea's nearly total dependence on the U.S., there was never total cooperation by President Rhee. There were several reasons for this. The American reevaluation of South Korea's value for U.S. global strategy, as a typical case of the patron-client relationship, convinced Rhee to take it for granted that he could make special claims on the U.S. for its role in the U.S.-led free world security system. Given Robert Keohane's argument that U.S. global policy was to contain Communist expansionism at any price and burden,<sup>220</sup> Rhee was presented with an opportunity to use a certain amount of bargaining power. Under the conditions of global competition which marks superpower interaction, a small state assumes a value to the great power states, as they compete for ascendancy over each other, based not only upon the small state's intrinsic worth but also upon its ability to put other powers at a disadvantage. A small state can then become a scarce resource which is sometimes able to extract a considerable price for its particular contribution to its patron state. Additionally, as Rhee's anti-Communist posture reflected the mood of the right-wing Republicans in the 1950s, Rhee not only raised his prestige in the world of anti-communism but also reinforced his bargaining power with the U.S.

Keohane considers the nature of the American political system to be another important factor in understanding the bargaining power of small allies. Certainly, Rhee managed to exploit the interaction of the American power system, in which American policy is largely the outcome of clash and compromise among separate interest groups

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<sup>220</sup> Robert Keohane, 'The Big Influence of Small Allies', *Foreign Policy*, 2 (Spring 1971), pp. 161-163.



and bureaucratic units.<sup>221</sup> He often attempted to boost the value of South Korea's geopolitical advantage to U.S. military strategy, knowing that U.S. policy makers put a great emphasis upon the importance of protecting its small allies regardless of the costs. As time went by, however, Rhee's bargaining power was bound to diminish compared to the background of the periods of the Korean armistice and the Korean phase of the Geneva Conference. The Eisenhower administration was able to increase its control over the South Korean government through the mechanism of aid programmes, the allotment of which was crucial to Rhee's military and economic policies.

During the Rhee regime, South Korea was continually seeking means to strengthen and consolidate U.S. commitment by enhancing its value as an ally, by itself playing in the larger context of the cold war in East Asia. The reason for Rhee's offer to the U.S. to dispatch the ROK forces to Indochina was his personal ardent desire to lead an anti-Communist front in Asia and to attract favourable U.S. public opinion. Thus the rationale could be seen as an attempt to gain a central position for Korea in the global war against communism alongside an ambition for regional political power. Patron-client state relationships can be better understood as fundamentally bargaining interactions in which each state tries to extract from the other valuable concessions at a minimum cost.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 164; Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, 'Alliance Strategy: U.S.-Small Allies Relationships', Journal of Strategic Studies, 3 (1980), p. 205.

## **4. Rhee's Conflict with the United States and the Downfall of His Regime**

With the Korean cease-fire, U.S. influence was concentrated primarily on military and economic areas. Even though the Eisenhower administration sought to restrain Rhee from obvious political errors and excessive measures against Koreans, they did not go as far as the point of confrontation. In the eyes of the South Koreans, the United States played a critical role in the progress of democracy. Unlike Rhee, the U.S. paid attention to fair elections, civil liberties, adherence to constitutional process, and maintenance of a capable opposition party. However, in most cases, American influence on Korean political affairs resulted in problems for the bilateral relations between the two countries. While President Rhee personally managed South Korean foreign and domestic policies from the Korean armistice until 1960, the United States frequently met his bluffs and uncooperative stance over U.S. regional strategy towards the Far East and the Korean economic plan.

Until 1960, the United States, for its part, accepted Rhee as South Korea's inevitable leader during his life time, despite the difficulties of dealing with him, and regardless of his undemocratic political regime. In 1960, however, the Eisenhower administration was constrained to give more support to his overthrow. It is therefore important to assess the extent to which the U.S. and South Korean governments clashed over Korean internal political and economic affairs, thereby resulting in Rhee's resignation.

The ultimate objective of U.S. policy towards South Korea in the 1950s was to assist the ROK to make a substantial contribution to the Free World's strength in the



Pacific area. This was achieved by encouraging the conditions necessary to form, and then to participate in, a Western Pacific collective defence arrangement, including the Philippines, Japan, the Republic of China, and South Korea, eventually to be linked with ANZUS and SEATO. The United States sought to influence the ROK government and political leadership to support U.S. views on major strategic policy towards East Asia. However, President Rhee was not an ideal client from the viewpoint of American strategic objectives. His resistance resulted in many problems with American policy makers during the Eisenhower administration. ROK-Japanese relations are a good example of this. When meeting with Rhee in 1953, Secretary Dulles emphasised the strategic importance of the anti-Communist bloc in the Western Pacific sector.<sup>1</sup> For this security interest, a close cooperative relationship between South Korea and Japan was seen as a prerequisite. However, Rhee's response was entirely negative; he asked Washington to stop Japan's military and economic build-up. U.S. sponsorship of the Tokyo-Seoul negotiations did not diminish Rhee's stubbornly held anti-Japanese posture. Such negative attitudes to American East Asian strategy made U.S. policy makers consider his removal and the support of a new flexible leadership who would be responsive to U.S. policy.<sup>2</sup>

With the deterioration of Korean politics in 1960, the United States decided to withdraw support from Rhee, thereby paving the way for the new policy of Korean-Japanese normalisation, and created a triangular security relationships between the U.S.,

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<sup>1</sup> FRUS, 1952-54, vol. 15, p. 1473, First Meeting between Rhee and Dulles, 5 August 1953.

<sup>2</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 15, Operations Coordinating Board Report, 'U.S. Policy toward Japan', 8 April 1959. Washington policy makers believed that the resignation of President Rhee provided improved prospects for achievement of an over-all settlement between South Korea and Japan.

Japan, and South Korea. This was one of the most important U.S. security objectives in East Asia after the Korean War. This chapter therefore assesses the extent and in which circumstances Rhee did not go along with U.S. policy, and how his negative attitude induced withdrawal of American support when Rhee encountered great domestic resistance to his regime.

### **The Normalisation of South Korea-Japan Relations vis-à-vis U.S. Security Interests in East Asia**

The Cold War atmosphere in East Asia and eventually the Korean War greatly changed the role and interests of the United States in ROK-Japanese relations. The Eisenhower administration tried to reintegrate East Asia into a strong anti-Communist bloc from the strategic point of view, and to create a triangular security system between the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. A normalised relationship between the two Asian countries was indispensable to this policy. However, the postwar relations between South Korea and Japan were not normalised, not only because Japan was still regarded as the enemy, but also because Koreans were annoyed at the U.S. policy of giving economic priority to Japan.

During the Korean War, the economic benefits accruing to Japan from the U.S. made a great contribution to the economic revival of Japan. The U.S. regarded Japan as the heart and soul of the situation in the Far East. If Japan was not on the U.S. side, America's East Asian position would become untenable. The U.S. from the beginning of its economic aid to South Korea attempted to encourage and expedite trade with Japan as a natural market and source of supply. Korean agricultural and marine



products were needed by Japan and in turn Japan provided the main source of equipment for South Korea, which was compatible with Korean industrial factories built in the thirty-six years of Japanese colonial rule. President Rhee suspected Japan's economic intentions, even though he knew that normalisation was indispensable.<sup>3</sup> The United States managed to maintain pressure on both countries to work for a settlement until the final exchange of ratifications of the Agreement of Normalisation of Relations came in December 1965. The State Department, led by Secretary Dulles, believed that the revival of trade with Japan and the creation of a favourable climate for foreign investment—especially Japanese investment—could bring South Korea steady progress towards self-sustaining growth.

In September 1951, President Rhee publicly declared his discomfort about the signing of the U.S.-Japanese Peace Treaty. He regarded it as a great threat to Korea and a stepping-stone for Japan towards economic and military domination of the East Asia area. Despite this mistrust, the treaty led to Korean recognition of the need to consider future relations with Japan. Until late 1951, the U.S. authorities in Japan had made numerous efforts to mediate the disputes between South Korea and Japan before U.S. influence over Japan diminished because Japan would be restored to full sovereignty along with the conclusion of the Peace Treaty which would be effective in April 1952.<sup>4</sup> Preliminary talks which were the first official contacts between Korea and Japan started

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<sup>3</sup> KPR, 726.23 1954/137, Rhee to President Eisenhower, 4 February 1954. Rhee conveyed his complaint about U.S. economic policy by saying: American aid funds given for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Korean economy have been spent more for the Japanese than for the Korean economy.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Korean View of Korea-Japan Relations and Japan's Asian Policy, Reference No. 13 (1957), p. 7.



on 13 October 1951.<sup>5</sup> The U.S. maintained the position that South Korea and Japan should be responsible for all negotiations but, if required, it would be ready to act as a mediator. This passive American position continued until Rhee's Government collapsed. American policy makers believed that Rhee's rigid anti-Japanese position was the main obstacle to normalised relations. Formal talks between South Korea and Japan began in Tokyo on 15 February 1952, but reached a deadlock. The main substantive issues in the normalisation of Korean-Japanese relations were fisheries and the 'Rhee Line', property claims, and Korean residents in Japan.

The East Sea (Sea of Japan) located between Korea and Japan was an important fishing area. During the U.S. occupation of Japan, General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, allocated outer limits for Japanese fishermen, referred to as the MacArthur Line. On obtaining its independence in 1948, South Korea started policing the Korean side of the MacArthur Line. As the restoration of Japanese sovereignty was imminent, President Rhee unilaterally declared the 'Rhee Line' in January 1952, which superceded the MacArthur Line which was to be eradicated with the end of the American occupation of Japan.<sup>6</sup> This action in the arena of the Korean War surprised Washington and Tokyo. The U.S. objected to this unilateral action and emphasised the desirability of untangling the problem through a fishing agreement. Irritated by South Korea's continued seizing of Japanese fishing vessels, on 27 September 1952 General Clark, UN Commander, constituted a 'Sea Defence Zone'

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<sup>5</sup> NA, RG 59, 695.95/9-1151, Telegram 245, Embassy in Korea to the State Department, 11 September 1951; RG 59, 795B.00/9-2651, Dispatches 98, Embassy in Korea to the State Department, 28 September 1951.

<sup>6</sup> Dong-A Ilbo, Seoul, p. 1, 18 February 1952; Korean Office of Public Information, Korea and Japan (Seoul: Office of Public Information, 1954), pp. 17-18.



(often referred to as the Clark Line) for security against Communist intrusions during the pending war, but principally planned to prevent further aggravation of the fishery disputes between South Korea and Japan. Clark's move displeased Japan. After the Korean armistice, the Japanese government requested the Zone's abrogation and it was suspended in August 1953.<sup>7</sup> In spite of this action, South Korea maintained the Rhee Line, reaching at some points sixty miles off the coast. Inside this line Rhee forbade any Japanese fishing. Numerous Japanese fishing boats had been seized for violating the line which Japan did not recognise.

Rhee's Government argued for reparations from Japan for damages and indignities to persons, real properties and assets during Japanese colonial rule of Korea. The Japanese did not accede to this claim and asserted their property claims towards Korea. They indicated that 85% of the property in Korea had been owned by them. The U.S. was involved in this issue because it had seized all Japanese assets in the southern part of Korea. The U.S. had transferred all seized Japanese property to South Korea in the 'Initial Financial and Property Settlement' on 9 September 1948. However, the Japanese contended that Japan still had valid property rights in Korea, since international law did not permit the American military government to transfer full rights.<sup>8</sup> The U.S. position over this problem was that negotiations concerning property claims were a bilateral matter between South Korea and Japan. Such an ambiguous American attitude made this problem much more difficult afterwards.

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<sup>7</sup> Dong-A Ilbo, Seoul, p. 1, 5 September 1953; William Vatcher, Panmunjom (New York: Praeger, 1958), p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> NA, RG 59, 694.95/3-2552, Yang to Acheson, 25 March 1952; 694.951/4-852, Memorandum of Conversation, Han and McClurkin, 8 April 1952.



After World War II, approximately 700,000 Korean nationals remained in Japan and some dissatisfied South Koreans illegally infiltrated Japan. At that time, Rhee's Government disregarded their welfare except to the extent that its national prestige and security were involved. South Korea insisted on full rights for Korean nationals in Japan, but South Korea refused to accept the repatriation of Koreans whom the Japanese wished to deport because the Korean resident was, partly because of racial prejudice, thought to be mainly a problem of Japanese social instability, and South Korea would not seriously consider a repatriation plan unless Japan paid the costs.<sup>9</sup>

With the end of the Korean War in July 1953, Japan re-examined its foreign policy in the Cold War. Furthermore, commercial interests exerted pressures on the Japanese Government to seek trade with Communist China. The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC) exploited the situation and initiated steps towards a possible rapprochement with Japan.<sup>10</sup> Given the Japanese sentiments against rearmament, the Japanese government, led by Premier Ichiro Hatoyama, wished to

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<sup>9</sup> NA, RG 59, 694.95/12-2950, Telegram 1281 from Tokyo, 29 December 1950, Korean Public Information Office, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 7, NSC 166/1: U.S. Policy toward Communist China, 'Chinese Communist Intentions towards Non-Communist Asia and the West', 6 November 1953.

In Northeast Asia, China's interest was to insure the safety and potential future expansion of the North Korean regime and to attempt to neutralise the threat of Japan. Short-term policy emphasised Korea but in the long term the Peking regime was most deeply concerned over Japan, which alone could be a military threat to the PRC in the Asian countries. In the field of economy, Peking was anxious to extend its commercial contacts throughout Asia, particularly with Japan, not only because of the need for trade in China's industrialisation programme, but also because trade offers were considered by the PRC to be powerful weapons in neutralising the anti-Communist posture of many Asian governments.



make Japan a neutral nation. This would definitely undermine U.S. influence over Japan's rearmament programme.

Since 1953, despite the U.S. effort to contain the Chinese Communists, China had made significant encroachment into American influence in Japan. During 1953-1954, pro-Chinese attitudes predominated in Japan.<sup>11</sup> Given these circumstances, the Hatoyama cabinet favoured negotiations for a peace treaty with the Soviet Union and for the assumption of normal trade relations with the PRC, <sup>negotiations</sup> which were very successful.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles had plans for promoting a security pact which would draw together Japan, South Korea, Formosa, the United States and perhaps the Philippines. However, this plan met an impasse because of the breaking off of diplomatic relations between the ROK and Japan.<sup>13</sup> In the last quarter of

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<sup>11</sup> Hugh Borton, et al., Japan between East and West (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 208.

The PRC offered to repatriate some 30,000 Japanese nationals in China to further enhance favourable Japanese attitude towards its regime. Over the next two years, approximately 29,000 Japanese were repatriated during the first arrival of repatriates in Japan on 20 March 1953.

<sup>12</sup> The Japanese knew that compared to trade with the U.S., trade with the PRC would not amount to much but in order to persuade the Americans to allow Japanese goods into America, the Japanese purposely made an agreement with China.

<sup>13</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 7, NSC 5416, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, 'United States Strategy for Developing a Position of Military Strength in the Far East (NSC Action No. 1029-b)', 9 April 1954; *ibid.*, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 8, Summary of Meeting on Southeast Asia, 24 July 1954; White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Dulles to Embassy Tokyo, 5 August 1954. Basic to the establishment of a non-Communist position of strength in the Far East was the rehabilitation of the Japanese military forces. The United States, although realising certain risks of Japanese military revival, fostered Japanese rearmament in the light of the security interests of the U.S. in the Far East.



1954 the Eisenhower administration seriously urged Rhee to repair relations with Japan, and highlighted the possibility of reducing aid to Korea if he refused. In this respect, the U.S. thought that once they had committed themselves to the aid programmes Rhee desired, especially the military programme, without having required him to settle issues with Japan, the possibility of doing so later would be correspondingly reduced.<sup>14</sup>

Acceding to U.S.'s firm stand on Korean-Japanese relations, in January 1955 South Korea made overtures to Japan for the reopening of ROK-Japanese negotiations.<sup>15</sup> However, subsequent approaches by North Korea to Japan, in which North Korean Premier Kim Il Sung proposed a normalisation of diplomatic relations, and the favourable response of some private Japanese groups, brought these efforts to naught. Japanese foreign policy towards the pro-Communist attitude irritated President Rhee, who was well known as the toughest anti-Communist in the world,<sup>16</sup> because he feared Japanese policy would damage his position.

The Japanese government from mid-1955 wished for an independent-oriented policy in its relations with the United States vis-à-vis its relations with the PRC. It also tried to revise the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty in order to reduce Japan's dependence on the United States. To discuss the issue, Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and Secretary General Nobusuke Kishi visited Washington in August 1955 and the Dulles-Shigemitsu Joint Communiqué on 31 August unveiled the responsibility of Japan to defend the Western Pacific and a subsequent increase in the Japanese self-defence

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<sup>14</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.5/9-2054, Ambassador Briggs to the State Department, 29 September 1954.

<sup>15</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 36, Memorandum for the President, 'Suggested Reply to Rhee's Letter of 29 December 1954', 28 January 1955.

<sup>16</sup> New York Times, 1 June 1955, p. 5.



forces.<sup>17</sup> Under the new security system, Japan was to undertake a lot of the burden in the economic development of Asia and the security of East Asia. These decisions made other Asian countries feel insecure. South Korea was exceptionally concerned by the Eisenhower administration's effort to make Japan the main power base for the implementation of its containment policy in Asia.

In the face of continued Japanese trade with Communist countries, Rhee directed a total suspension of trade with Japan. This action brought about greater problems for South Korea than for Japan. The economic embargo against Japan was not effective in controlling Japanese policy because South Korea, at that time, was not so powerful in the economic sphere.<sup>18</sup> As a counter measure against continued Japanese relations with North Korea, Rhee's Government tried to capture increasing numbers of Japanese fishing vessels which were violating the 'Rhee Line'. As the relations between South Korea and Japan deteriorated, the Eisenhower administration had serious concern for the persistent conflict over the 'Rhee Line' following active U.S. mediation for early Korean-Japanese cooperation. At that time, Rhee quite often disclosed his objection to the U.S.-Japanese policy of encouraging the rearmament of Japan, whereby Japan could be given a stronger position in East Asian affairs. Assuring Rhee of continued U.S. concern, the Eisenhower administration had to indicate that it had no intention of enriching Japan at the sacrifice of South Korea. Nevertheless, when Washington proposed the creation of a so-called Asian Collective Security Organisation, Rhee

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<sup>17</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 23, part 1(Japan), pp. 90-120, 29 and 31 August, 1 and 2 September 1955.

<sup>18</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, Box 49, Japanese-ROK Relations, 1 June 1955; OCB Central File Series, Box 50, Detailed Development of Major Actions Relating to U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea, 17 November 1955.



rejected any possibility of Japanese membership of the organisation.<sup>19</sup> At this juncture, the U.S. and Japanese leaders realised that an early rapprochement between South Korea and Japan was a prerequisite to any successful anti-Communist regional defence system in Asia. Furthermore, without South Korea's cooperation, Japan would experience great obstacles in carrying out its new role in Asia.

Following U.S. mediation efforts, South Korea and Japan, realising the necessity for an early reconciliation, resumed informal and formal talks in 1956. For the Japanese government, the increasing numbers of fishing vessels and fishermen captured by Korean patrol boats and detained by Korea constituted a serious social and political problem. For this reason, Japan desired reconciliation with South Korea. President Rhee also realised that rapprochement with Japan was inevitable because, as the leader of a client state, he had to recognise the U.S. strategy towards East Asia—the new phase of American containment policy based on the 'New Look'—but he was not willing to enter negotiations until Japan withdrew the Kubota assertions of 1953 and Japanese property claims against South Korea.<sup>20</sup> In spite of the different opinions within the

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<sup>19</sup> Korea Times, Seoul, 23 July 1956, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Korean View of Korea-Japan Relations, p. 15.

At a meeting of the claims sub-committee of the Japan-Korea Conference on 15 October 1953, Chief Japanese Delegate Kenichiro Kubota stated that the repatriation of Japanese from Korea, the disposition of Japanese property in Korea by the American military government, and the establishment of an independent Korean state before the peace treaty with Japan were all violations of international law; that the description in the Cairo Declaration of Korean 'enslavement' was wartime hysteria; and that "Japanese colonial rule of Korea for 36 years was beneficial to the Korean people." This last statement would become a serious obstacles in proceeding with formal negotiations between South Korea and Japan. The Japanese governments were reluctant to make a formal withdrawal because of the effect on South Korean property claims, as well as for considerations of face value.



Japanese government, it was about to withdraw the Kubota statement if this would facilitate the normalisation of relations between the two countries, but refused to retract Japanese property claims. In this regard, the Japanese stand was to minimise the South Korean property claims against Japan, or to obtain mutual cancellation of the both countries' property claims.<sup>21</sup>

By the end of 1956, most foreign policy problems between Japan and its neighbouring countries were satisfactorily completed. In October Japan signed a fisheries agreement with the Soviet Union and a similar agreement with the PRC. The only remaining tasks to be resolved were the renegotiation of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the normalisation of diplomatic relations with South Korea. The Hatoyama cabinet were willing to reopen the talks in order to lay the ground for better relations with other Asian neighbouring countries. This plan was once again rebuffed by the initial repatriation activities of the Japanese government. Ever since the Japanese attempts to repatriate a large number of Korean residents in Japan to South Korea as undesirable aliens had failed, since Rhee's government refused to accept them, the Japanese government started to manoeuvre to send the Korean nationals in Japan to North Korea. For South Korea, this was viewed as a great boost to the North Korean regime in terms of much-needed manpower and international prestige.

Tanzan Ishibashi gave an optimistic sign to South Korea while taking over the new premiership. On 27 December 1956, Foreign Minister Nobutsuke Kishi argued for non-recognition of the PRC because it was not a United Nations member, and further stated his wish for normalisation of Japanese-South Korean relations, including the

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<sup>21</sup> Korea Times, Seoul, 28 August 1956, p. 2.

release of Japanese fishermen detained in Korea.<sup>22</sup> Keeping a delicate political balance towards the Communist countries, Japan's key economic policy was to maximise foreign trade with Southeast Asia and the PRC. For this reason, Japan had to develop all of its trade relations with Southeast Asian countries. This trade would provide access to abundant supplies of raw materials and enhance Japanese prestige as well as providing a substantial market for Japanese goods.

However, many Asian countries suspected Japanese intentions, reacting with bitterness because of the Japanese invasion during World War II. Nobutsuke Kishi, who became the new Prime Minister on 25 February 1957, believed that an early rapprochement with South Korea would enhance Japan's image in Southeast Asia. Accordingly, he expressed his willingness to meet President Rhee personally to expedite an early rapprochement. Subsequently, Kishi proposed a simultaneous release of the detainees. However, Rhee's Government persistently insisted on the withdrawal of Japanese property claims as a prerequisite for the resumption of formal negotiations.<sup>23</sup> Despite pressures for an early reconciliation with South Korea, the Japanese government felt that it could no longer make any concessions because of the possibility of political instability being caused by socialists who were endangering the more important foreign policy—the re-negotiation of the American-Japanese Mutual Security Treaty. Consequently, the South Korean-Japanese talks met another stalemate.

As negotiations for the Mutual Security Treaty proceeded, Washington policy makers were convinced that a rapprochement between South Korea and Japan was indispensable to the creation of an effective anti-Communist system in Asia. They

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<sup>22</sup> Japan Times, Tokyo, 27 December 1956, p. 1; Dong-A Ilbo, Seoul, 5 January 1957, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Asahi Shinbun, Tokyo, 13 July 1957, p. 1.



believed that a regional system based upon a unified military strategy for Japan, South Korea and Taiwan was a prerequisite for security in the region. To fill the vacuum created by any withdrawal of American ground forces from Japan and South Korea, strong conventional military forces against the Communists in East Asia were needed. However, an effective security system in the region as the cornerstone of the U.S. containment policy was inconceivable in the absence of cooperation between South Korea and Japan, in both defensive and economic matters.

Despite the need for a collective security system and the advantages of normalised relations, there remained little expectation of them as long as Rhee retained his presidential power. For this reason, Japan would have to make considerable concessions to South Korea in order to normalise relations. Premier Kishi endeavoured to settle all pending issues in a series of talks. This willingness stemmed from his economic policy in Southeast Asia. The Japanese acknowledged that if they expanded their economic aid to other Asian countries before normalising relations with South Korea, South Korea's demands would become even higher.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the Kishi cabinet demonstrated its willingness to withdraw the Japanese property claims against South Korea if Rhee's Government came to terms with Japan regarding the detainees issue. The Japanese government had to settle this issue because of domestic political pressure for bringing the detained Japanese fishermen back home. Following a month of negotiations in the preliminary session, the two governments finally reached an agreement on 31 December 1957 with regard to the detainees. At the same time the

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<sup>24</sup> Theodore McNelly, 'Japan's Role in Southeast Asia', Current History, 49(November, 1965), p. 291.



Japanese government withdrew the polemical Kubota statement and retracted its claim to properties in Korea.<sup>25</sup>

For the Japanese, there were problems including the detainees, the need to secure the settlement of the 'Rhee Line' and South Korea's property claims against Japan. However, President Rhee did not make any concessions to Japan until both countries reached satisfactory settlements for all other pending issues. The most crucial matter amongst them was the status of Korean residents in Japan. The Eisenhower administration was deeply concerned with this issue since it was one of the stumbling blocks in Korean-Japanese relations. More significantly, it became a Cold War issue because the Japanese, who were frustrated in their attempts to cope with the troublesome Korean community, allowed the Japanese Red Cross to negotiate with the North Korean Red Cross, who initiated a large-scale voluntary repatriation programme to North Korea. In December 1957, the Japanese Red Cross asked the International Red Cross to intervene on their behalf. The International Red Cross accepted its role as mediator on the principle of reuniting the separated families. While the rigid stand by the two governments impaired the political compromise, Premier Kishi sent a personal envoy to Rhee for the purpose of solving the impasse. Despite this positive step, South Korea, at that period, did not have the capability to absorb the Koreans residents in Japan, at least not the necessary financial support.

During the summer of 1958, the early rapprochement between Japan and South Korea was greatly strengthened by the incidents of the Quemoy and Matsu crisis<sup>26</sup> along

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<sup>25</sup> Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Ministry Bulletin, No. 13 (1958), pp. 102-103.

<sup>26</sup> The largest of several 'offshore islands' included in the territory of Taiwan since 1949, despite the proximity of the Chinese mainland. The islands were used by the Nationalist armies of Chiang Kai-shek as a base for amphibious guerrilla raids, especially in the period 1953-58. Peking renewed intensive daily



the Formosan straits. The Eisenhower administration considered that the Communist threat against the security of their allies in the Pacific surpassed national hostility. The Eisenhower administration tried to persuade both countries to make a concession but these efforts failed not only because of Rhee's suspicion of American willingness to rearm Japan, but also because of the rigid stand by both the ROK and the Japanese governments.<sup>27</sup>

The year of 1959 was regarded as an intolerable period for both countries. When the Japanese government realised that there would be no possibility of compromising on the impending issues—the 'Rhee Line' and the detainee issue—it decided to resume its efforts to repatriate pro-North Korean residents. The Japanese-North Korean talks over the repatriation issue were timely, taking place immediately before the U.S. and Japan signed their mutual security treaty. The Japanese pro-Communist rallies against the security treaty effectively nullified any possible U.S. opposition to the repatriation

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shelling of the islands in August and September 1958, threatening an invasion or a blockade. As in 1954, tension mounted rapidly and the United States was poised for massive intervention. Peking demanded the surrender of the islands, which was met by a declaration by Dulles to the effect that the U.S. would fight to protect Formosa and another by Eisenhower defining the islands as necessary for its defence. The Formosan government was assisted by supply vessels escorted by U.S. warships. U.S. allies, American public opinion, and the Democrats opposed a showdown over the islands. This opposition to military action persuaded Eisenhower to adopt a more conciliatory policy. The crisis was deflated by the resumption of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. With the unilateral declaration by Peking of its alternate-day cease-fire, the shelling was directed away from harbour and supply areas. Chiang committed himself not to attack the mainland again without first consulting the United States by Dulles' successful persuasion. The Taiwan Straits crisis had actually subsided. The Eisenhower administration achieved during this period the object of showing that the American decision not to intervene in Indo-China in 1954 did not betoken a general American failure of will.



programme.<sup>28</sup> The repatriation negotiations with North Korea were devoted to counteracting the current anti-security movement in Japan by presenting an image of independence from the U.S. to the Japanese people. Under these circumstances, Rhee's Government was considerably ineffective in persuading Washington to directly intervene in the repatriation issue. Furthermore, the Eisenhower administration were sympathetic to the Japanese stance in this issue. The State Department helped restrain the Korean government from any reckless action against the transporting of vessels across the East Sea (the Sea of Japan).<sup>29</sup>

The issue of the Korean nationals in Japan was being used by the current Japanese regime for domestic political purposes for recovering the Japanese people's support. Accordingly, the issue was a convenient vehicle by which they could stir up emotions for their political gains.<sup>30</sup> The Japanese government planned the Repatriation issue partly to use as a bargaining point to win concessions from South Korea on the question of the 'Rhee Line'.<sup>31</sup> If the Japanese government were to settle the question of the

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<sup>27</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/407, Letter no. 1045, Rhee to Ambassador Yang, 4 November 1958.

<sup>28</sup> There was a strong suspicion in the South Korean government that the Japanese government threatened the United States not to sign the revision of the Security Pact unless it could successfully carry out the deportation scheme. For this reason, Rhee was confident that the Eisenhower administration pressured his government into giving in as much as it could so that the U.S. could get the pact signed.

<sup>29</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/427, Yang to Rhee, 17 February 1959; Douglas Mendel, The Japanese People and Foreign Policy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 190.

<sup>30</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/428, Mass Expulsion of Korean Residents in Japan to North Korea, 10 March 1959; 773.1 US/432, Letter no. 71, Han to President Rhee, 16 April 1959. The Japanese government intended to deport Korean residents as an excuse to get rid of Korean communists in Japan because it had its own problem of communist subversive activities.

<sup>31</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/432, Letter no. 74, Han to Rhee, 20 April 1959.



‘Rhee Line’, it would expect to get a greater advantage in domestic political affairs. Rhee’s Government denounced these negotiations, and proposed an unconditional resumption of talks with Japan in an effort to prevent the Japanese from signing the Japanese-North Korean repatriation agreement.<sup>32</sup> In spite of the effort of Rhee’s Government, Japan and North Korea continued their negotiations and agreed the repatriation on 16 August 1959. In this case, the Kishi government effectively manipulated the two Koreas so as to settle an annoying issue of the unwanted Korean minority in Japan.

When the Japanese government planned to repatriate the Korean minority to North Korea in the summer of 1959, the Eisenhower administration did not support Rhee’s rigid anti-Japanese policy which did not leave any room for the Japanese to compromise with South Korea. Rhee’s emotional hatred against Japan, a rigid trade barrier against Japanese goods, and frequent trade suspensions had brought South Korea’s economy to a standstill. In spite of inexpensive Japanese goods and geographic advantage, Rhee was often prepared to buy expensive commodities from other countries.<sup>33</sup> Washington’s policymakers quite often indicated that early normalised relations between South Korea and Japan would be advantageous to both Korean economic development and Korean interests themselves. Unable to prevent the repatriation programme, the United States tried to persuade Rhee to acquiesce in it,

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<sup>32</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/432, Letter no. 90, Han to Rhee, 23 April 1959.

<sup>33</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/427, Cable no. WM-0653, Korean Embassy in Washington to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 June 1959; 773.1 US/431, Letter no. 88, Rhee to Minister Han, 16 July 1959; Pyong Choon Hahm, ‘Korea’s Mendicant Mentality’, *Foreign Affairs*, 43 (1964), pp. 165-174.



while seeking to ensure that the programme was on a voluntary basis.<sup>34</sup> The South Korean government argued against the Eisenhower administration's strong inclination towards the Japanese deportation scheme and did not resume negotiations with the Japanese because it was regarded as a sign of giving in to the Japanese repatriation scheme.<sup>35</sup> At last the first ship with repatriates for North Korea departed Japan in mid-December and it seemed inevitable that Japan-ROK talks would end. Foreign Minister Jung-hwan Cho submitted his resignation to Rhee on 19 December owing to his failure to block repatriation.<sup>36</sup>

The U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty was signed on 19 January 1960 and gave the Japanese further responsibility for its own foreign relations and defence. This treaty satisfied the Japanese government's desire for a larger measure of military power and a greater regional role, and the American desire for a joint strategic system in East Asia. Under these circumstances, Rhee's Government's effort to prevent the repatriation to

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<sup>34</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/7-2459, Embassy Seoul to State Department, 24 July 1959; 795B.00/12-3159, 31 December 1959; KPR, 773.1US/430, Yang to Rhee, 'Comments on the Korean Repatriation Problem by Mr. Lincoln White, State Department Spokesman, at his Press Conference', 29 October 1959; *ibid.*, Information no. 469, 5 November 1959; Information no. 483, 12 November 1959.

The State Department unveiled its displeasure to You Chan Yang, Korean Ambassador to America, while he was provoking anti-repatriation campaigns by American churches who favoured stopping the deportation scheme of Japan, and public opinion groups. The New York Times carried an article stating that the Department of State had reprimanded him. The State Department frequently tried to stop Yang from making speeches criticising Japan's actions. State warned Yang that a foreign diplomat should not use American platforms to criticise and condemn the actions of another friendly ally of the United States.

<sup>35</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/431, Letter no. 118, Rhee to Han, 3 September 1959.

<sup>36</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Progress Report: Korea, Week of 14-18 December 1959 and Week of 21-25 December 1959.



North Korea was insignificant to American policymakers in Washington in comparison with the purpose of effecting a successful implementation of a major U.S.-Japan alliance. As the repatriation was the first massive defection from the Free World to a Communist country, the prestige of South Korea was bound to be damaged.

The deteriorating relations between South Korea and Japan became a serious concern for the Eisenhower administration. It thought that Rhee's Government should reconsider its Japanese policy and take a more realistic viewpoint.<sup>37</sup> As a result of the combined efforts of American political and economic pressures, and opposition attacks on Rhee's Japanese policy, the restrictions on Korean-Japanese trade by the Korean government were gradually relaxed.<sup>38</sup> Once the American-Japanese Security Treaty was signed, the Japanese government attempted to undertake its next major foreign policy task—normalising relations with South Korea. Despite agreement on resuming negotiations on 15 April through a series of talks between the two governments, normal relations were not achieved because the Rhee regime fell quickly because of the

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<sup>37</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 436<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 'Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security', 10 March 1960; KPR,773.1 US 1960/1359, Ambassador Yang to Rhee, 16 March 1960. Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, reported that the dispute between Korea and Japan over fishing rights and the seizure of Japanese fishermen on the high seas was reaching a climax; the Japanese government considered various means of retaliation, including armed protection for Japanese fishing boats. The United States had informed Rhee in the past that it did not accept the 'Rhee line', but never made this decision public, not wanting to exacerbate the dispute. However, having been impatient with Rhee's strong hatred towards Japan and acknowledging Kishi's domestic dilemma with the fishery issue, Washington urged upon Rhee the immediate release of the Japanese detainees.

<sup>38</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Progress Report: Korea, Week of 22-26 February 1960.

‘Student Uprising’ on 19 April 1960.<sup>39</sup> After the fall of the Rhee regime, the new Korean government, led by Prime Minister Myon Chang, was less hostile towards Japan, and recognised the political and economic necessity of friendly ROK-Japanese relations. However, Chang’s government, given the parliamentary system of the Second Republic, could not control party competition and political opposition to its Japanese policy. Ultimately, the long-craved U.S. hope of ROK-Japanese relations was not normalised until General Chung-hee Park’s military coup in 1961 succeeded and established the Third Republic.

## **U.S. Economic Policy towards Korea and Its Negative Effects on Rhee’s Government**

Economic relations between the two countries during the period of 1953-1960 were one-sided. The United States was the donor and South Korea the recipient. Emphasising the politics of aid giving, the central function of foreign aid was intended to serve the donor’s foreign policy interests. As an instrument of foreign policy, foreign aid served American interests by countering communism and developing stable democratic regimes. This assumed that economic development would lead to political democracy in a recipient country capable of defending itself against the spread of communism.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Dong-A Ilbo, Seoul, 22 April 1960, p. 1; Japan Times, Tokyo, 27 April 1960, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 235<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, ‘Future United States Economic Assistance for Asia’, 3 February 1955; Fairless Committee Records, Box 10, ‘U.S. Foreign Economic Assistance Views of Chiefs of Mission’, 10 October 1956.



Foreign aid is an important source for financing security and economic growth in the client state. To a dependent country survival and prosperity depends on the heavy flow of foreign aid and security assistance from a big power state. A policy change persistently requested by the latter is a significant pressure on the former. As an aid package constitutes an important part of the small state's fiscal and administrative operations, the small state's external autonomy becomes increasingly limited in domestic and foreign policy spheres where the big power retains an interest and tries to exercise its leverage. This also makes the client state quite vulnerable, thereby forcing it into a subordinate role, allowing only one-sided concessions to the patron. The client relieves psychological and material insecurities by associating with a patron. In such a patron-client relationship, the patron supports the client's economy for ideological and military reasons, partly to demonstrate the superiority of its system to that of its rival.<sup>41</sup>

American foreign aid to South Korea during <sup>the</sup>1950s was primarily intended to serve the economic and foreign policy interests of the U.S. This also provided additional economic resources to South Korea which were to be utilised for economic programmes consented to by the United States. In addition to the foreign policy quid pro quo at the initial stage of the commitment of aid, regulations together with the subsequently established decision-making procedures provided the U.S. with legal and structural leverage to intervene in South Korean economic policy making.<sup>42</sup>

The first official commitment to an American aid programme for South Korea, after its independence, was conceived in the context of fulfilling the American foreign policy interests of containing Soviet influence in the southern part of Korea. At the core

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<sup>41</sup> John A. White, The Politics of Foreign Aid (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), pp. 78-90.

<sup>42</sup> KPR, 761.42 US/332, Agricultural Commodities Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Korea, 13 March 1956.



of the U.S. interests in the zone and its commitments was not the survival of South Korea as such, but the potentially negative psychological and political impact of the area's Sovietisation on other countries. This included the Far East and Southeast Asia to which the U.S. promised political and economic support.

The foreign aid programmes in the Cold War period included large amounts of direct military and military-related aid designed to serve strategic rather than economic purposes. The question of American commitment to economic and military assistance to Korea during 1945-1953 was essentially a political one that was to serve U.S. prestige and credibility. The economic price of a comprehensive long-term aid for a self-sustaining South Korea was not justifiable since the territory of South Korea was not regarded as of any particular value to the overall American strategic position in the Far East and the aid was largely limited to relief activities.

A major change in official American aid policies in Korea to a systematic relief and rehabilitation programme evolved from the armistice deals that the United States negotiated with South Korea. In order to persuade Rhee to accept the final American proposal for the truce terms, Eisenhower officially promised to offer a comprehensive aid programme to South Korea in definite terms as a way to win Rhee's cooperation in reaching an armistice.<sup>43</sup> Economic and military assistance to South Korea from the United States was decisive for Korea's survival after the Korean armistice. The United States had various motives for providing assistance to South Korea. Firstly, the American government feared that without foreign assistance the South Korean economy would collapse. As American prestige, credibility, and international image became even

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<sup>43</sup> For details for Korean armistice negotiations and its bargaining process between U.S. and South Korea, see Chapter 1.



more closely connected to the development of South Korea, after the Korean War which had claimed a great number of the American lives and billions of dollars, American economic assistance could help establish a sound economic base enabling South Korea to become a showcase of democracy in Asia. Secondly, American assistance gave the United States leverage by which it could restrain Rhee's aggressive unification policy. Lastly, American economic and military assistance were seen as giving the United States an important apparatus by which it could influence South Korea's domestic policy. Aid was the most significant leverage the U.S. had in dealing with South Korea, and the U.S. used it as an instrument to force specific policy changes.

American economic assistance to South Korea was institutionalised in a manner which assured American participation in many areas of South Korean governmental decision making. A Combined Economic Board<sup>44</sup> was established by the U.S.-Korean Economic Coordination Agreement of 1952—namely, the Meyer Agreement which allowed direct U.S. involvement in South Korea's economic policies. Rhee and his government only reluctantly agreed to this arrangement since it disclosed the infringement of South Korea's sovereignty.<sup>45</sup> Following the Korean armistice, economic and military aid deepened South Korean dependence upon the United States. Consumer products and primary goods made up large portions of the aid. Imports in

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<sup>44</sup> The Board, with its American and South Korean representatives as joint chairmen, took responsibility for directing and coordinating existing relief and reconstruction agencies and organisation in Korea.

<sup>45</sup> KPR, 741.94, Treaty-624 1952/280, Agreement on Economic Coordination between the ROK and the U.S., signed and entered into 24 May 1952; 741.94, Treaty-624 1953/281, Combined Economic Board Agreement for A Programme of Economic Reconstruction and Financial Rehabilitation, 14 December 1953.



this period were financed largely by aid programmes. Consumer goods predominated in imports and investment goods made up less than 14% of all imports during the 1953-1960 period.<sup>46</sup>

The two major agreements that defined American aid to South Korea through the 1950s were the Economic Cooperation Agreement (ECA) of 1948 and the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951 (the Battle Act). The outright prohibition of resale of aid under the ECA agreement had a major effect on South Korean economic development and decision-making during the Rhee regime. To protect American economic interests, South Korea could not export any of its major industrial products while receiving the U.S. grant-type economic and military aid. If the U.S. recommended certain changes necessary from the American view point, the South Korean government was obliged to make specific changes in overall economic policy. It also provided the U.S. with the legal power to influence not only the distribution of the counterpart funds and commodities imported under the aid programme, but also decisions about the use of South Korea's own funds in connection with the counterpart funds.<sup>47</sup> The Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act affected South Korea's economic strategy. Since the Act controlled exports of strategic materials that posed a threat to the U.S., a recipient country could not transfer any possession of material without the consent of the U.S.

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<sup>46</sup> D. Chin, et al., 1950 Nyondaeui Insik [The Knowledge of the 1950s] (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1982), pp. 208-219.

<sup>47</sup> 'Agreement on Economic Cooperation', in U.S. Treaties and Other International Agreements, no. 1908 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office., 1948), pp. 492-99; Section 101(d), Title I, 46. PL 480, United States Statutes At Large, Vol. 68, Part 1 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. 455.



President.<sup>48</sup> Under this prohibition, export of the kind of items imported under American aid programmes was prohibited, even though they had been produced partly with the recipient's own resources.<sup>49</sup>

After the Korean War, the United States systematised its anti-China containment policy centring upon military-economic ties with Japan. The regional security complex in East Asia played an important intermediary role between the global pattern of U.S.-Soviet rivalry and the security interests of local states. The recognition of the Cold War provided the United States with the need to reassess their Japanese policy, and to initiate a reindustrialisation programme for Japan. Japan, therefore, became a major economic beneficiary of the Offshore Procurement Programme during the Korean War. The programme enabled Japan to subcontract a portion of domestic military spending to foreign corporations.<sup>50</sup> Multibillion dollar spending paid for the Japanese trade deficit, temporarily solved the Japanese dollar gap, and brought Japan its first postwar taste of prosperity. The long-term aims of U.S. policy towards Japan after the Korean War were

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<sup>48</sup> The Mutual Defense assistance Act of 1949, Title IV: General Provisions; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, The Mutual Security Act of 1956, 84<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 1956, House of Representative 2213, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> Alice Amsden, Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 66.

<sup>50</sup> The value of U.S. procurement programmes during the three-year Korean War was well above the value of total U.S. aid from 1945 to 1951. This created an industrial boom above its prewar level and set the country on the road to economic recovery. As a price for the restoration of Japan's independence in 1952, the Japanese government agreed to the continued stationing of U.S. troops on its territory. As the result, Japan continued to receive substantial amounts of financial support from the U.S. military procurement programme even after the Korean armistice. Quoted from C. J. Lee and Hideo Sato, U.S. Policy Toward Japan and Korea (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 17.



to foster reconstruction of Japanese industry, to ensure its economic ties with the United States, and to achieve limited rearmament in order to secure a strategic partner in East Asia.<sup>51</sup> Even though the Korean War reduced some of the urgency of that conviction, the Korean cease-fire restored America's great anxiety. The sharp reduction of the Special Offshore Procurement Programme, the rapid reappearance of a Japanese dollar gap, and the apparent incompleteness and unevenness of Japanese recovery all pointed to Japan's pressing need for economic opportunities in non-dollar areas. In order to reduce its trade deficit Japan had to buy more of its raw materials and food from places other than the U.S., and had to find overseas markets to earn foreign exchange with which to make up the remaining shortage in its dollar account. Japanese reindustrialisation was accorded profitable markets and cheap raw materials in the Asian rimlands, including the PRC as well as South Korea and Southeast Asia.<sup>52</sup> The American policy that the aid given for the Korean economy should be used to buy Japanese products generated Rhee's suspicion and criticism about the Eisenhower administration's aid policy, which was intended to secure two dollars of benefit (one for Japan and one for South Korea) from every dollar expended.<sup>53</sup> From the U.S. view

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<sup>51</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 216<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 6 October 1954 and 226<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1 December 1954.

<sup>52</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 226<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1 December 1954; Thomas J. McCormick, America's Half-Century (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 114-115. Despite taking strict measures to prohibit the Free World from trading with the PRC, at the National Security Council meeting, the Eisenhower administration decided to permit the Japanese to trade with the PRC in much more generous terms than Great Britain. Eisenhower was afraid that Japan might well go Communist if it were deprived of the possibility of trading.

<sup>53</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.B.11/2-1554, Rhee's letter to Eisenhower, 4 February 1954; 795.00/5-954, Ambassador Briggs to the State Department, 19 May 1954; DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-



point, Japan would turn to communist trade unless the U.S. helped Japanese industries. Furthermore, Rhee suspected that the United States and Japan might have reached a secret agreement on placing South Korea under Japanese control.<sup>54</sup>

The most common and explicit confrontation between Washington and Seoul occurred around the post-war economic recovery plan and foreign exchange rates. Rhee's Government was most unwilling to compromise in areas such as the allocation of aid between investment and salable commodities, the selection of projects, imports from Japan and exchange rates. These were also the areas in which the U.S. was not readily willing to compromise. Although the Koreans requested investment for economic growth, the United States provided consumer goods in order to stabilise the economic deterioration caused by severely ~~increased~~ inflation, due to the huge ROK military budget deficit, resulting in currency expansion.<sup>55</sup> This conflict was mainly because U.S. aid was designed not in the context of a long-term economic growth of the ROK, but rather as a short-term check on economic instability. The main purpose of

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Herter Series, Box 3, Briggs to Secretary Dulles, 11 May 1954; Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 37, Rhee to Eisenhower, 29 December 1954; KPR, 761.42 US/332, Memorandum on Current Problems in Korea, 25 January 1955.

<sup>54</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 226<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 1 December 1954; Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 37, Rhee to Eisenhower, 29 December 1954; NA, RG 59, 795.00/Korea, Embassy in Seoul to Secretary of State, 15 September 1955.

<sup>55</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, OCB Central File Series, U.S. Objectives and Courses of Action in Korea, 25 March 1954; Insang Song, 'Reflections on the Economic World', Seoul Kyungjae Sinmun [Financial Newspapers], 1 May 1979.

U.S. aid was principally to maintain national security and stability, not to develop a self-sustaining Korean economy.<sup>56</sup>

The U.S. had an important interest in South Korean foreign exchange rate adjustments since they were directly related to the pricing of aid imports in South Korean currency. This in turn affected the magnitude of the government's budget support from the sale proceeds of aid imports, the size of the dollar reimbursement of the U.S. forces' local currency advances to the South Korean government.<sup>57</sup> The U.S. proposed to devalue the exchange rate of the Korean currency to a desirable level. From the South Korean point of view, these American attempts would reduce the maximum benefits from the foreign exchange reserves made available by American aid and the U.S. forces. With regard to economic aid, Rhee considered that U.S. aid was inadequate to South Korea's needs. At the same time, he was dissatisfied with the arrangement under which the aid was administered directly by U.S. officials who concentrated too much on relief measures and consumer goods rather than on production and reconstruction.<sup>58</sup>

During this period it was difficult to distinguish military from U.S. economic aid. In most cases, the two were so inter-related that the UNC had to control and advise about aid programmes. Rhee and his government sincerely desired to use the aid for

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<sup>56</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central File Series, OCB 387.4 Korea [Armistice] (File #2) 3, OCB File No. 26, 2 December 1954.

<sup>57</sup> KPR, 761.42 US/332, U.S.-ROK Economic Cooperation, Joseph J. Caputa, Acting Economic Coordinator of the UNC to Mr. Paik, ROK Economic Coordinator, 19 January 1955; 'Auction on 28 February 1955 of UNC military aid dollars for Ministry of Defence requirements', Paik to President Rhee, 2 March 1955; Paik to Tyler Wood, Economic Coordinator of the UNC, 2 March 1955.



exclusively economic development. In this instance, Rhee believed that counterpart funds, a large part of which had been used to support the South Korean forces, should be used only for economic reconstruction.<sup>59</sup> The Korean President was convinced that this conversion would build up a self-sustaining nation which was always his goal. However, in this period, as Washington had only considered the role of the ROK in the light of strategic policy for East Asia, the economic development of Korea was an indifferent matter.<sup>60</sup>

Since the armistice, from one-half to two-thirds of the funds in the economic aid programmes, had been used for the importation of salable commodities, in order to arrest the violent inflationary movement which plagued Korea and to provide the local currency required for the support of all aid programmes. The emphasis in aid programmes was therefore upon price stability rather than capital investment and development. The U.S. policymakers realised that this anti-inflationary device might result in raising the consumption level of Korea to a point which could not be sustained, in future, by its own economy, particularly in the absence of an adequate economic development programme.<sup>61</sup> However, owing to the emphasis upon Korea's importance

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<sup>58</sup> FRUS, 1955-57, vol. 23, part 2 (Korea), pp. 131-33, President Rhee to the Assistant Secretary Robertson, 1 August 1955.

<sup>59</sup> Together with other military and economic aid, the United States financed out of counterpart funds a deficit of \$120-130 million in the Korean military budget.

<sup>60</sup> KPR, 729.54 1956/151, Rhee to UN Commander Lemnitzer, 30 March 1956; 761.52 US/337, Lemnitzer to Rhee, 25 April 1956.

<sup>61</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Council of Foreign Economic Policy (CFEF) Series, Box 12, Report on Foreign Economic Policy Discussions between United States Officials in the Far East and Clarence B. Randall and Associates, 'Some Observations on US foreign Economic Policy in East Asia with Particular Reference to Korea', December 1956.



from a military point and ignorance of economic development of Korea by Washington, Korea's capital and production investment would be postponed until the Third Republic, led by President Chung-hee Park, initiated long-term economic plans, which would be ignited by Japanese compensations and loans.

During the 1953-1957 period, economic growth rose to about 5% per annum, which was considered a reasonable rate. During the 1958-1960 period, growth was substantially slower. These differences between the two periods stemmed from aid flows which peaked during 1957 and then started to decline.<sup>62</sup> A client state should expand its financial capacity via external resources such as foreign aid. The external channel of financing is an important link between patron and client states, and this aid increases the client state's internal autonomy through its domestic distribution process.<sup>63</sup> The amount of U.S. aid was cut down from 1958, aggravating the financial problems of Rhee's Government. Even though it was clear that the reduction was part of a U.S. aid policy, the U.S. was likely to cut the amount of aid for the purpose of destabilising Rhee's Government, which had been seriously considered by Washington policy makers, and to replace it with one which would comply with U.S. policy.

From the last quarter of Rhee's rule, South Korea encountered a drastic cut in economic and military aid from the U.S. even though the South Korean government delivered a fervent hope that no such reduction should be made.<sup>64</sup> When military and

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<sup>62</sup> Anne O. Krueger, The Developmental Role of the Foreign Sector and Aid (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 41-42.

<sup>63</sup> C. Carney, 'International Patron-Client Relationships: A Conceptual Framework', Studies in Comparative International Development, 24 (1989), p. 49.

<sup>64</sup> KPR, 773.1 US 1958 Han V.1/414, Minister Pyo Wook Han, Washington, to President Rhee, 3 April 1958.



economic assistance decreased in the late 1950s, a serious fiscal crisis took place and the economy went into a recession, whereby Rhee's political power was wrecked.

Owing to his dependence upon American aid programmes, Rhee could not avoid U.S. control over Korean decision-making. The bulk of American grant-in-kind aid to South Korea was appropriated as Mutual Security Funds in the 1950s. The size and composition of the South Korean budget was calculated based upon certain goals mutually agreed to by the two governments and on advice and screening by the Military Assistance Advisory Group to Korea on an annual basis. The aid mission and South Korean government representatives in turn determined what was required to maintain an agreed economic growth and defence level, and then set a level for economic assistance. Special conferences on Korean budgets were held regularly in the United States Embassy in Seoul. It was a decisive factor to raise the question of sovereignty. No matter how much money Korea had been given from the U.S., that the conference was held in the American Embassy was a crucial matter.<sup>65</sup>

The only comprehensive and systematic state economic programme during Rhee's Government was made up of activities surrounding the allocation of annually appropriated American aid. Between 1954 and 1960, about 50% of South Korea's annual national budget derived from American foreign aid sources, equaling the annual budget for the South Korean military establishment. This foreign assistance enabled the ROK to maintain a huge number of military forces for the defence of its own and U.S.

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<sup>65</sup> KPR, 761.52 US/337, Informal Minutes of IST Special Conference on Budgetary Problems, 20 August 1958. In this meeting, major attendants were: Ambassador Walter C. Dowling and UN Commander General George H. Decker for American side, and Reconstruction Minister, Defence Minister, Commerce Minister, and Agriculture Minister for Korean side. In the course of meeting, they dealt with various national problems—financial stabilisation programme, balanced budget, anti-corruption bill, and so on.



interests in East Asia. At that time, the South Korean economy was still considerably dependent upon the United States. Korean exports were quite small, amounting from \$22 million in 1957 to \$20 million in 1959. For almost a decade South Korea imported approximately ten times more than it exported. The deficits were made up by American aid.<sup>66</sup>

A substantial reduction in U.S. economic assistance not only reduced the availability of counterpart funds for support for the ROK military budget, but also inevitably reduced the already low living standards and increased opposition to President Rhee and his administration. Accordingly, such an economic aid shortage caused Rhee's Government's domestic politics to become unstable because the discretionary allocation of aid and imports was a political instrument for Rhee, who faced a growing political challenge from the opposition in the late 1950s.

### **Rhee's Authoritarian Rule and Dispute with the U.S.**

Democracy was considered an aspect of U.S.-South Korean political relations. After the Korean War, U.S. policymakers planned to make South Korea a showcase of democracy in Asia. Following the cease-fire, Rhee's position was undermined by his

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<sup>66</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 29, NSC 6018, U.S. Policy toward Korea, 28 November 1960; Korean Economic Planning Board, Korea Statistical Yearbook, 1969 (Seoul: Economic Planning Board, 1969), p. 275. South Korea's foreign trade balance was almost ludicrously unfavourable and the Korean economy was extremely dependent upon large-scale U.S. aid. Thus, over 90 percent of Korea's imports were financed by U.S. aid and U.S. defence expenditures in Korea.



dispute with the U.S. over the Agreed Minute in 1953 and 1954,<sup>67</sup> and his attempt to amend the constitution in 1954 to maintain political power. Washington often considered the issue of the succession of Rhee's Presidency because of his advanced age and his intractable stance against the U.S. For the United States, however, the main deterrent to a change in Rhee's position was that there were no alternative leaders with Rhee's prestige and charisma.<sup>68</sup> The United States believed that Rhee's departure from office would usher in a period of increased political instability; regardless of who succeeded Rhee, a successor regime should have to be more cooperative with the United States and less intransigent in its dealings with Japan.<sup>69</sup>

At the outset of 1954, Rhee's Government disclosed its long-term primary domestic political objectives for keeping its power. The continued existence of the Communist regime in North Korea offered Rhee's Government an excuse to usurp the power of the legislature. In this sense, communism not only constituted a visible,

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<sup>67</sup> NA, RG 59, FE files, lot 55 D 480, UN Commander Hull to Ridgway, the Chief of Staff, US Army, 8 November 1954. In order to cope with Rhee's continued unwillingness to cooperate with U.S. policy in Korea, U.S. decision makers arranged an integrated plan which contained four series of actions, designed to develop mounting pressures on Rhee's Government. Each of the actions contained economic, military and political measures which would be implemented to the extent and at the rate necessary to induce Rhee's cooperation with U.S. policy. The specific measures among those recommended were as follows: (a) in military relations, slow-down of military programme, announcement of the possibility of redeployment of the U.S. forces from Korea, withdrawal of all U.S. and UN forces; (b) in economic relations, reduction or suspension of all economic aid programmes; (c) in political relations, reducing U.S. relations with Rhee's Government to the minimum level, and increasing contacts with Rhee's political opponents and Korean military commanders, who would be supported by the U.S. as substitute leaders.

<sup>68</sup> FRUS, 1952-54, vol.15, pp. 1914-15, Briggs to Dulles, 9 November 1954.



external, physical threat to democracy in South Korea but also accelerated the formulation of an extreme rightist autocracy in a country that was supposedly democratic. At the National Assembly elections of 20 May, the government's interference in varying degrees was widespread and, combined with the police action prior to the election day, substantially affected the outcome. Censure of the election procedures for the one-party trend would be a sign of the beginning of unstable Korean politics. The United States did not voice its ill-favoured statement not only to avoid Rhee's criticism against American interference, but also to have the Korean political conference under consideration, which was currently in session. Washington appraised the developments in Indo-China which helped prevent the Korean elections from becoming an issue at Geneva.<sup>70</sup>

In November 1954, there was a crisis when a constitutional amendment was forced through the legislature to remove the prohibition on a third term for President Rhee. Rhee pushed again as in the 1952 constitutional crisis.<sup>71</sup> A constitutional

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<sup>69</sup> FRUS, 1955-57, vol. 23, pp. 216-17, Editorial Note.

<sup>70</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.B.00/7-1457, Ambassador Briggs to the State Department, 14 July 1954.

<sup>71</sup> The confrontation between Rhee and his political enemies in 1951-1952 was a watershed in Korea-U.S. relations. The constitution provided for the election of the President by the National Assembly in 1952, but the Assembly was increasingly critical and hostile towards Rhee. The idea of a Constitutional amendment to establish a parliamentary government was again discussed, such as the proposal of amendment of 1950. Rhee wanted a constitutional amendment of his own for the direct popular election of the President and Vice President. In October 1951, Rhee's Government put forward proposals for direct presidential elections and for a bicameral legislature, but the proposals failed when voted on in January 1952. On 7 May 1952 the Assembly announced a constitutional amendment to establish a quasi-parliamentary system. An Assembly election for President would not return Rhee to office. Rhee took an initiative for a new constitutional amendment on 14 May when the vote on the 7 May proposal



amendment was formally proposed by the Government which would remove the two-term limitation, and in order to simplify government, the abolition of the prime ministerial position. In the vote on 17 November, there was a strong opposition to the amendments and 135 members supported it out of the total membership of 203. Since the required two-thirds was 136, it was declared a failure. However, Rhee and his supporters forced a reinterpretation, known as “round to the nearest whole number.” Rhee signed the amendments and promulgated them on 30 November 1954.

At the beginning of 1955, with Rhee’s stubbornness against U.S. policy, Washington policy makers decided that the U.S. should assist a new leadership to

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approached. He inspired a government-organised demonstration designed to intimidate opposition Assemblymen, and notified the U.S. Ambassador that he could not leave office in the midst of the Korean War. Rhee declared that there was a subversive plot to have Myon Chang elected President, who would then form a coalition government and one willing to deal with North Korea to end the hostilities and unify Korea. Rhee declared martial law without consulting the UNC. A campaign of intimidation and harassment against the National Assembly continued for a month and 12 Assemblymen were arrested for participation in a vague Communist plot without clear evidence. Rhee threatened to dissolve the Assembly even though he had no such power under the current constitution. At last, Rhee had his own objective with a few minor compromises. The presidential election was held on 6 August and Rhee won 74.6 percent of the popular vote. There was considerable resentment among the opposition and Koreans against the U.S. for not intervening actively in the 1952 crisis. At the time, the decision was made at a high level within the Truman administration not to interfere with the internal affairs of the ROK. This decision was caused by a number of reasons: in particular, Rhee was engaged in an all-out campaign against an armistice, partly to improve chances for his re-election; with continued large-scale fighting on the battle fields, U.S. military commanders were reluctant to get involved in political controversy which might affect the security of their rear areas; and there was apprehension in Washington that opposition to Rhee might result in public and Congressional negative reaction who had admired his firm anti-Communism.



assume power, by means of U.S. overt support when necessary, and should promise to be decisive in firmly establishing a new leadership.<sup>72</sup> This plan would be substantially carried out during the fall of the Rhee regime in 1960.

The consequence of these developments in November 1954 was a strong trend towards a two-party system. A new, enlarged opposition party, the Democratic Party, emerged in September 1955, and managed to surmount its internal differences until it took power in 1960 after the fall of Rhee's regime.<sup>73</sup> The trend was demonstrated in the presidential election in 1956, and termed by the U.S. Embassy in Korea a turning point in Korean politics. At the outset of 1956, the U.S. was concerned about the development of Korean political stages. The minor opposition party mounted a vigorous campaign for its candidates, ex-Assembly Chairman Ik-hi Shin for President and ex-Prime Minister Myon Chang for Vice President, against Rhee and Ki-poong Lee respectively, for the Liberal Party.<sup>74</sup> There was a surprising degree of press freedom, and a relative reduction of the traditional official pressures on the electorate and candidates. This was a direct result of Rhee's recognition that his extreme anti-U.S. and anti-NNSC positions of 1953 and 1954 had lost American support. The atmosphere of Korea's first real political contest for the presidency was greatly heightened by the sudden death of Candidate Shin, ten days before the election. As the vote count came in on 15 May, it was clear that President Rhee would be re-elected, but the vice-presidential vote was extremely close. There were rumors of opposition plans for violence, in conjunction with the impending funeral ceremony of Shin, if the election

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<sup>72</sup> FRUS, 1955-57, vol. 23, p. 37, Gleason to Dulles, 18 February 1955.

<sup>73</sup> Tae Su Han, 'A Review of Political Party Activities in Korea, 1955-1960', Korean Affairs, 1 (1962), pp. 412-417.



results were found to be rigged. In these circumstances, the American Embassy officials approached the opposition leaders to avoid violence.<sup>75</sup> Rhee's Government was warned by the American Embassy that manipulation of the vote count would have serious domestic consequences. The Korean government also perceived the adverse domestic and international repercussions if it manipulated a vote count. As a result, Ki-poong Lee was defeated by the opposition candidate Myon Chang who, therefore, assumed his office. Notwithstanding his victory, the result outweighed the losing of Rhee's prestige in Korean politics. Whereas Rhee had received 74.6 percent of the total vote in 1952, the 1956 elections revealed stronger popular opposition to Rhee and the ruling Liberal Party because he received only 55.6 percent of the popular vote. In this connection, Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), estimated that serious consequences would occur if Rhee "resorted to force to gain his ends."<sup>76</sup>

In spite of a rather startling decline in Rhee's influence, he and his associates moved against the growing threat to their power. Rhee did not show any change in his policies. He utilised his two main power bases—the police and the local bureaucracy, and the Liberal Party under Ki-poong Lee—as loyal instruments of his will. The U.S. Embassy was worried about Rhee's misunderstanding of the election's outcome and predicted that his inflexible political patterns would create increasing danger of trouble ahead.<sup>77</sup> The U.S. policymakers recognised that the election in May was a major

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<sup>74</sup> FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 23, p. 268, Editorial Note.

<sup>75</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 166-168.

<sup>76</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 287<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 'Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security', 7 June 1956.

<sup>77</sup> NA, RG 59, 611.95B/6-2956, American Embassy, Seoul, to the State Department, 29 June 1956.



political overturn which could lead to the opposition's inheriting power, combined with popular dissatisfaction. More importantly, they concluded that Rhee had failed to furnish South Korea the constructive leadership necessary for the achievement of American objectives in Korea.<sup>78</sup>

Following the 1956 elections, Rhee considered preventing Vice-president Chang's accession to the presidency in case of the incapacity of the president for any reason like a demise, and to establish greater parliamentary control.<sup>79</sup> Rhee reshuffled his cabinet and military leadership to install his firm supporters, and to have the National Police under the command of a heavy-handed officer who kept personal allegiance to him. The Army's Counter Intelligence Corps and the other major internal security force remained under Rhee's direct control.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, p. 291, Nes to Parsons, 12 July 1956.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-302, note 2, 3 and 4. Chang's inauguration statement, which was critical of the South Korean democratic situation and indicated that his role was to act independently of President Rhee if necessary on domestic matters, prompted the fierce denunciation of Chang in the National Assembly and in pro-government newspapers. At the meeting with an officer of American Embassy on 28 August, Chang told him that the ruling Liberal Party leaders were planning to "eliminate him from the scene." Chang asked whether he could count on sanctuary in U.S. installations if the threat to his life increased. At another meeting with Chang on 1 September, new American Ambassador Dowling, who presented his credentials on 14 July, forwarded his assumption to Chang by way of the officers that Chang's political career would be irreparably damaged by an attempt to seek refuge in an American installation, and that the position of the United States in Korea would also be damaged. The officer assured Chang that if a genuine threat to him developed, the U.S. would exert influence to try to prevent such development.

<sup>80</sup> FRUS, vol. 23, pp. 334-337, Editorial Note. In order to seize the Korean forces definitely, Rhee shifted Il Kwon Chung, former Army Chief of Staff, who had shown himself as more amenable to U.S. guidance, to the Chairmanship of the JCS, which was a position of less military influence. Another action tending to reduce the influence of General Chung was a major reshuffle of army general officers initiated



In late 1957, the growing Liberal party division between the moderate and hard factions became evident in debates over revisions to the election law. Mounting opposition popularity posed the real danger of a Liberal Party defeat in the forthcoming 1958 Assembly elections and in the 1960 presidential election as well. The first major move against the progress of Korean politics was the arrest of Bong-am Cho, leader of the Nationalistic and Progressive Party<sup>81</sup> before the 1958 Assembly elections.

On 14 January 1958, shortly before the campaign for the National Assembly began, Cho was arrested on charges of violation of the National Security Act, which had a peaceful unification policy similar to the North Korean unification proposal,<sup>82</sup> combined with the doubtful nature of Cho's disavowal of Communist connection.

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by the new successor General Hyong Kun Lee, and approved by Rhee. Rhee took these actions partly because of concern over the failure of certain elements of the army to give its full support to him and the Liberal Party in the May elections, and because of the potential challenge to his position by General Chung, who had been known to be pro-American.

<sup>81</sup> Cho had been an active communist but renounced his past action, and was elected as one of the small number of non-Rightists in the 1948 constituent assembly. A man of considerable charisma and ability, Cho remained politically active, and in 1955 he organised a socialistically-oriented Progressive Party. Cho won 2,164,000 votes in the 1956 presidential elections not only because of the Democratic candidate Shin's untimely death, but also because of the attractive party slogan, which proclaimed advocacy of steps towards peaceful unification, which directly encountered Rhee's forceful reunification policy. Until then, all South Koreans were forced to believe that the only method of reunification was based on a military way. To make matters worse, the opposition Democratic party too was suspicious of Cho's possible secret ties with North Korea. When Rhee's Government moved against Cho, the Democrats were of no concern to help.

<sup>82</sup> NA, RG 59, 795.00/1-1358, Intelligence Note on the arrest of the Progressive Party leaders, 13 January 1958. Dulles was informed by this intelligence note that Although Cho's political views were far to the left of Rhee's there was no evidence to support the allegation that he was engaged in subversive activities.



However, the actual indictment was based upon charges of espionage not only due to the weakness of the subversive case, but also due to the Korean government's sensitivity towards the international reaction that might have resulted from the use of the peaceful unification issue. The arrests indicated fear of Cho's personal popularity and apprehension about the increase in popular sentiment favouring a peaceful unification and towards the Progressive Party's socialist platform.<sup>83</sup> On 13 June the prosecution demanded the death penalty for Cho and prison sentences for the other 22 defendants. The United States was concerned about the death sentence against Cho. The Embassy in Seoul was instructed to "immediately unofficially bring Washington's serious concern" to influential Korean officials in seeking to avoid the death sentence on Cho.<sup>84</sup> Despite U.S. apprehension, on 25 October 1958 the appellate court imposed the death sentence under obvious political pressure whereas the district court had sentenced Cho to five years imprisonment. Ambassador Dowling, at Washington's instruction, called on powerful leading members of Rhee's government and party to ask for a withdrawal of Cho's execution. After the meeting with highly powerful governmental members, Dowling was confident that the Supreme Court would reverse the decision of the appellate court. However, the former upheld the latter's decision on 27 February 1959. Dowling's endeavour was unfruitful. On 31 July 1959, Cho was executed abruptly. The execution resulted from a decision of the hard faction of the Liberal party to impress the opposition with their determination to preserve political

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<sup>83</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, vol. 18, pp. 433-434, Parsons to Jones, 3 February 1958.

<sup>84</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/6-1958, Embassy in Seoul to State Department, 19 June 1958; 795B.00/6-2058, State Department to Embassy in Seoul, 20 June 1958.



power. This execution made it clear that Rhee and his hard line supporters had abandoned any prospect of restoring their popularity by relying on liberal measures.<sup>85</sup>

As the 1960 presidential elections approached, Democratic Party leaders were confident of winning, if the elections were to be completely fair. Rhee's Government, however, was determined to retain power by every available means, including repressive and illegal measures. In the face of growing opposition power, the moderates of the Liberal Party were unable to resist the growing power of a hard faction in the Liberal party. They were determined to prevent the transfer of political power to the Democrats through constitutional processes as the 1960 presidential election approached. The United States was worried by the situation that should the forthcoming presidential elections be dominated by governmental pressures and intimidation designed to deny the opposition party a fair opportunity, the opposition would then adopt a programme of extreme harassment and obstructionism or even turn to more desperate counsels advocating a radical change in the government. In terms of the U.S. objectives of encouraging the long-term growth of democracy and achievement of political stability, the character of the 1960 presidential elections in South Korea was more important than the outcome of the elections.<sup>86</sup>

The struggle focused on the struggle for a proposed amendment to the National Security Law from the autumn of 1958 to the spring of 1959. This struggle laid the groundwork for the demise of Rhee's Government in 1960. The original draft amendment to the law, introduced on 5 August 1958, was purportedly aimed at

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 795B.00/7-258, Telegram 915 from Embassy in Seoul, 2 July 1958; 795B.00/10-2758, Telegram 189 from Embassy in Seoul, 27 October 1958; 795B.00/11-458, Telegram 206 from Seoul, 4 November 1958.



Communist subversion but permitted tightened restrictions on political activities and press freedom. The American Embassy was concerned that the loosely-drafted bill could be a threat to Korean civil liberties and it called into question the U.S. objective in terms of American-style democracy. The American Embassy contacted various government and Liberal party leaders to make them aware of the serious consequences from the international perspective. In accordance with Dowling's recommendation, the State Department conveyed the American Government's concern about Korea's international position regarding the current controversy over certain provisions of the Law affecting freedom of the press and political activities.<sup>87</sup> This wholesome advice infuriated Rhee, who saw it as an intervention in Korean internal affairs and an example of the American Embassy's support for the opposition.<sup>88</sup> On 19 December, the Liberal members passed the bill.<sup>89</sup> Since the success or failure of the American attempt to curb the Korean government's repressive measures would decide the political future of South Korea, Ambassador Dowling urged Washington to stimulate critical reaction in the American press so as to influence Rhee and his government officials, who were

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<sup>86</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/12-158, Embassy in Korea to the State Department, 1 December 1958.

<sup>87</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/405, Information no. 448b, Yang to Rhee, 4 December 1958; NA, RG 59, 795B.00/12-558, Ambassador Dowling to Assistant Secretary Robertson, 5 December 1958; 795B.34/12-658, Robertson to Dowling, 6 December 1958.

<sup>88</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, vol. 18, pp. 515-517, Korean Revised National Security Law, 12 December 1958.

<sup>89</sup> The National Security bill was passed without change by the ruling party members of the Assembly Legislation-Justice Committee in a three-minute session. When all opposition Assembly members gathered into committee a few minutes later, the Liberals seized the opportunity to cut off further committee discussion.



particularly sensitive to such criticism, to eliminate the restrictive press provisions.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, Dowling was extremely concerned about the possibility of Rhee's attempt to gag the political opposition in advance of the 1960 elections unless there was a strong reaction from the United States. Unequivocally, if Rhee's Government succeeded in the enactment of the present version of the amendment, the United States would run a grave risk of a serious loss of its ability to influence South Korea.

Unfortunately, events in Seoul moved too fast for Eisenhower's message to have any effect on Rhee.<sup>91</sup> On 24 December, while opposition Assemblymen were forcibly confined to the Assembly restaurant by Assembly guards reinforced by police, Liberal Party members passed the National Security Law 128-0 with only inconsequential amendments. The American Embassy viewed both the content of the law and the manner of its passing as a grave setback to the development of Korean democracy.<sup>92</sup> Hearing this news, the State Department made a statement to the press on 24 December, hoping that the Law would not be used to hinder democratic development. However, this statement reflected U.S. cautious and passive views on ROK developments.

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<sup>90</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, vol. 18, p. 518, Embassy in Seoul to State Department, 20 December 1958.

In this period, Rhee's Government believed that Ambassador Dowling and his staffs' positive activities in Korean domestic affairs were caused by the orders from their superior officials in the State Department.

<sup>91</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 37, Eisenhower to Rhee, 25 December 1958. On 25 December, Eisenhower expressed his deep concerns about the manner in which the Law was adopted by the National Assembly. However, this letter did not include strong U.S. concern and objections against the Security Law.

<sup>92</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B/21/12-2458, Dowling to Herter, 24 December 1958. The refusal to permit the senior U.S. Embassy officer to attend the National Assembly proceedings on the National Security Law made Washington disturbed about the manner in which the law was passed.



Washington policy makers did not want to involve the Eisenhower administration in acrimonious debate with the Korean government.<sup>93</sup> At the meeting with Dowling, who delivered Eisenhower's message of 25 December,<sup>94</sup> Rhee commanded his well-known skill of evasion, and misled Dowling in understanding that he would correct this regretful incident vis-à-vis the Law.<sup>95</sup> A few days later, Rhee's response to Eisenhower's message vividly revealed his true position over the development of the Law. He emphasised the inevitability of excluding the opposition during the adoption of the Law because those Assemblymen excluded had attempted to disrupt normal proceedings.<sup>96</sup> Combined with the Eisenhower administration's effort, Congressman Walter Judd, a close friend of Rhee, showed deep concern about the deplorable situation of Korean politics in order to induce Rhee's reconsideration of the law.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/12-2458, Herter to Dowling, 24 December 1958.

<sup>94</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, International Series, Message from Eisenhower to Rhee, 25 December 1958; Washington Evening Star, 5 January 1959. President Eisenhower pointed out to Rhee the painful impression the curtailment of 'civil rights' in Korea had had on the people of the United States. Rhee in turn pointed out that South Korea, like the Taiwanese government, was in a state of war with the Communists in the north; while Formosa was separated from the PRC by 100 miles by water, South Korea was within gun range of North Korea; and hence severe laws against espionage and subversion were as essential as keeping the army at the ready. Washington Evening Star, 5 January 1959.

<sup>95</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.21/12-2758, Dowling to Herter, 27 December 1958. As the President controlling Korean affairs both domestically and internationally, it was believed that Rhee knew the whole process of the Law. However, he pretended not to be aware of the illegal process of the Law. Confirming passing the law, he then showed his disengagement of the incident, where it made allowances for Rhee to engage in bargaining with the United States.

<sup>96</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Rhee to Eisenhower, 7 January 1959.

<sup>97</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, vol. 18, pp. 525-526, State Department to the Embassy in Korea, 27 December 1958.



In terms of U.S.-South Korean relations, 1959 was bound to be a difficult year because possible U.S. influence would be likely to have an important effect on the forthcoming course of Korean political events—the 1960 presidential election. To prepare a concrete and detailed assessment of the Korean situation, Ambassador Dowling was recalled to Washington, and the American Embassy was instructed to confine U.S. contacts with Rhee's Government to the most essential activities during his absence, in order to reveal the U.S. annoyance with regard to the National Security Law.<sup>98</sup> However, Rhee himself was not swayed by these developments. Rhee and the tough faction of his party believed that regardless of actions they took domestically, the United States would have no choice but to support them. While exploiting the conservative congressmen and American Military General's advocating of the Law, Rhee had nurtured the impression that if he took a strong position, the U.S. would back down.<sup>99</sup>

The Eisenhower administration was unable to change the situation with the limited resources it was willing to employ. However, Washington began to contemplate

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<sup>98</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/1-759, State Department to Embassy in Korea, 7 January 1959; 795B.00/1-1459, State Department to Embassy in Korea, 14 January 1959.

<sup>99</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/432, Letter no. 7, Han to Rhee, 21 January 1959; 773.1 US/427, Ambassador Yang to Rhee, 22 January 1959. In the House of Representatives on 19 January 1959, Congressman Walter Judd advocated the National Security Law because of South Korea's hostile situation with North Korea, and stated that the Law was purely to punish the tremendous number of communist subversive agents coming into South Korea. Persons like General Lemnitzer were also quite angry at some of the American newspapers' hostile criticisms. In these circumstances, Rhee was very suspicious that some of the State Department officials were feeding information to the correspondents to impair his regime. Minister Han, Korean Embassy in Washington, informed Rhee that his close press friends received a great deal of critical information from State officials.



serious consequences in terms of U.S. interests in Korea, and believed that when Rhee was no longer on the scene, the Liberal Party would probably be unable to maintain control by forceful measures. In this respect, the American Embassy in Seoul strongly urged Washington to adopt a positive course of action towards the Korean government. This was to prevent the eventual use of authoritarian actions to suppress the opposition and curb the free press, which could endanger the achievement of U.S. objectives in South Korea to encourage a politically stable and militarily strong nation which was pro-U.S. and anti-Communist in character.<sup>100</sup> In response, Rhee attempted to convince Washington of his assurance not to misuse the Law and emphasised that the incidents vis-à-vis the Law concerned Korean internal affairs only.<sup>101</sup> Regarding his worries about U.S. concerns over Korean affairs, Rhee was convinced that Secretary Dulles and his office was determined to get rid of him and this conviction would cause a great impact on U.S.-ROK relations with oncoming development of Korean domestic politics.<sup>102</sup>

Meanwhile, the U.S. government informally encouraged compromise between the two Korean parties because the impasse between Liberals and Democrats continued till January 1959. The American Embassy continued to compromise between the two parties with respect to revising the law during February and March. The United States government was concerned deeply, during this period, about the possibility that the Korean people might react strongly or even violently if the continued operation of

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<sup>100</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/1-2459, Dowling to Robertson, 23 January 1959.

<sup>101</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/426, Rhee to Yang, 28 January 1959.

<sup>102</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/431, Rhee to Minister Han, 29 January 1959; 773.1 US V.1/428, Information No. 79, Yang to Rhee, 11 March 1959.



democratic machinery by the majority party and minority parties was prevented.<sup>103</sup> Following the National Assembly recess on 20 March, a series of inter-party talks started, but nothing substantial was accomplished due to the rigid positions held by either side, and bipartisan efforts collapsed in May 1959.<sup>104</sup>

To make it more serious, Rhee's Government cancelled the publishing license of Korea's second largest newspaper, Kyunghyang Sinmun, which was closely identified with the opposition party. The Korean government's determined action on 1 May to keep Kyunghyang Sinmun closed, and the manner in which Pong-am Cho's death sentence was executed, clearly revealed the iron fist with which the government was prepared to suppress the political opposition in anticipation of the 1960 Presidential elections. The U.S. voiced its concern with respect to the freedom of the press, particularly in view of the fact that the controversy over the National Security Law had still been fresh in Congress and the American press.<sup>105</sup> Ambassador Dowling continued to criticise Rhee's Government's undemocratic activities. Rhee was furious about the American Ambassador's defiance.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, the death of Dulles and Assistant Secretary Robertson's leave from the State Department made Rhee much

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<sup>103</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, OCB Series, Subject Subseries, Box 3, 'Coordinating of Planning and Implementation of United States Programs in Korea, 16 February 1959.

<sup>104</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/1-3059, State Department to Embassy in Seoul, 30 January; 795B.00/2-259, Embassy in Korea to the State Department, 2 February 1959; 795B.21/2-1159, 11 February 1959; 795.00/4-2959, 29 April 1959; 795B.5/5-1159, 11 May 1959.

<sup>105</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/432, Letter no. 71, Han to Rhee, 16 April 1959; 773.1 US/427, Yang to Rhee, 3 May 1959; New York Times, editorial, 4 May 1959.

<sup>106</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/431, Letter no. 53, Rhee to Han, 13 May 1959.



more gloomy about coping with pending problems with the U.S.<sup>107</sup>

In defiance of Rhee's Government's concern, Dowling warned Washington that unless a positive measure was taken against Rhee's Government, the U.S. would be in a difficult position vis-à-vis South Korea in the near future. He urged the United States to take positive actions, which, he believed, would have a major impact on Rhee and his government. The actions he recommended were: (a) the widest U.S. and international news and editorial coverage before and during 1960 elections; (b) visits by Congressmen and other prominent figures to deliver the U.S.'s serious concern and to persuade Rhee into returning to democratic rules; (c) emphasis by the United States Information Service (USIS) on the dissemination of information on the basic requirement of free elections and democracy; and (d) economic pressure.<sup>108</sup> The State Department agreed that these recommendations would be carried out in due time. Consequently, as an initial step, the Eisenhower administration undertook a complete review of the ROK police programme, and warned Rhee that any further use of the police in election campaigns could result in the cessation of U.S. aid for the Korean police; the next step was to cut U.S. assistance to the Korean Office of Public

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<sup>107</sup> KPR, 773.1 US/431, Letter no. 70, Rhee to Han, 9 June 1959. Although Rhee did not accept Dulles's Asian policy, especially with regard to Japan, he realised Dulles' talented ability as a Secretary of State and owed Dulles a great deal in U.S. Korean policy. Robertson was one of few top officials in understanding and advocating the South Korean position in the State Department. His leave meant a great loss to Rhee's influence on the Department that, Rhee believed, consisted of full supporters of Japan. Confronting the difficult position domestically and internationally, Rhee was concerned about the new Secretary of State, Christian A. Herter, who had been well known for expertise about Europe but little about Asia.

<sup>108</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, vol. 18, pp. 585-589, Dowling to the State Department, 28 September 1959.



Information, which had become identified with the government suppression of oppositions, from \$474,000 in 1959 to \$167,000 in 1960.<sup>109</sup>

In January 1960, the United States began to take a further stand against Rhee's regime, based on experience with 1959 crises—the North Korean deportation problem and the problem of U.S.-financed imports from Japan. The U.S. objective was to change ROK attitudes which directly affected U.S. interests. Accordingly, the new policy was applied to Korean relations with Japan, and to the problems of the Korean presidential election.

On 3 February 1960, Rhee's Government formally announced the presidential election date of 15 March, which was considerably earlier than usual, intended to capitalise on the Liberal Party's advance preparations and to take advantage of the disorganisation in the faction-ridden opposition party. To make the Korean tormented democrats even more miserable, the opposition presidential candidate, Pyong-ok Cho, died of cancer in the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington on 15 February.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, the Korean government continued with campaign abuses.

Shortly before the 1960 Presidential elections Washington decided that further steps to prevent the abuse of democratic processes in Korea should be carried out with the intervention in the domestic affairs of a foreign sovereign state. This was under the assumption that the presidential elections would stimulate Rhee's Government's serious attack on the operation of democratic institutions and processes in the ROK, and also boost Rhee's intransigent attitude towards the impending question of ROK-Japanese

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 589-594, Parsons to Herter, 22 October 1959.

<sup>110</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/2-460, Embassy in Seoul to the State Department, 4 February 1960; DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Progress Report: Korea, Week of 1-5 February and Week of 15-19 February 1960.



relations.<sup>111</sup> On the domestic scene in Korea, tension was heightened by increasing incidents and violence claiming some lives. To be more precise, there was the outbreak of student demonstrations, which was considered significant as this was the first act against the government since the establishment of the ROK.<sup>112</sup> The student demonstrations reflected substantial popular dissatisfaction with Rhee's regime and became a presage of the forthcoming student uprising which would result in Rhee's resignation.

The election resulted in an overwhelming majority for Rhee and his running mate, Ki-poong Lee, who ran unopposed after the death of Democratic candidate, receiving approximately 90 percent of the votes. Rhee's running mate defeated the opposition candidate Myon Chang. The elections were marked by violence, intimidation and fraudulent counting. There was a tremendous outcry in the American press. The crude and violent manipulation of the election results meant that the people were denied the last legal channel for expressing their political views. The accumulated resentments of the Korean people exploded in the city of Masan, located in the southeastern part of Korea, with a major civil disorder. A number of people were killed and many more injured as demonstrations stepped up into hostilities between the police and the demonstrators. Other clashes between police and demonstrators took place in many other cities during 15-16 March. When the ROK Army requested permission to use its troops to restore order, the UNC decided to give its consent.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/3-1060, 1960 Presidential Elections in the Republic of Korea, 10 March 1960.

<sup>112</sup> FRUS, 1958-60, vol. 18, Embassy in Seoul to the State Department, 12 March 1960.

<sup>113</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 437<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 'Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security', 17 March 1960; White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 9, Progress Report: Korea, Week of 14-18 March 1960. The State Department was concerned



Washington's initial reaction to the election was stronger action against the Rhee regime, led by the new Secretary of State, Christian A. Herter, who called in Ambassador Yang and handed him a firmly-worded aide-memoire dealing both with election abuse and with the intransigent ROK attitude towards Japan. Herter delivered Congressional and American public reaction about the election, which might adversely affect the American aid programme to Korea.<sup>114</sup> Rhee's Government's reaction was not encouraging, even though Rhee changed the Home Secretary and some high ranking officers. Rhee once again called for "a march north for unification" slogan, which was no longer effective for strengthening Korean unity. The reaction to such undemocratic activities by the Korean government caused greater anti-government feeling than at any time since the founding of South Korea. Concurrently, President Eisenhower did not congratulate Rhee on his fourth term of election and there was mounting Congressional criticism of Korea's police-state tendencies.<sup>115</sup>

In these circumstances, the United States decided to discard the passive American conduct towards the Korean government. As a first substantial move, the dedication of a new fertiliser plant provided by the American aid programme was deferred. However, the new Ambassador, Walter P. McCaughy, was worried about the situation, in which Rhee exploited one U.S. agency or department against another in Washington as

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over CINUNC's release of operational control of the ROK forces apparently without coordinating with the Embassy regarding the political implications of such an action.

<sup>114</sup> KPR, 773.1 US 1960/1358, Letter no. 123, Han to Rhee, 17 March 1960.

<sup>115</sup> KPR, 773.1 US 1960/1360, Telegram no. WM-0357, Korean Embassy in Washington to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 March 1960. President Rhee received warm messages from leaders of Asian nations such as the Philippines' President Carlos Garcia, Chiang Kai-shek of Taiwanese China, and Viet Nam's



well as in Seoul if they were not fully harmonised with each other concerning Korean affairs, and in which there was an inadequate coordination by the Executive with Congress. Rhee and his government regarded the State Department position as not necessarily that of U.S. Government as a whole.<sup>116</sup>

Prior to the U.S. efforts to control the Korean chaotic situations as set forth, an unexpected and stirring incident broke out on 12 April. The body of a student rose to the surface at Masan harbour, with grenade fragments driven through the right eye. Approximately forty thousand demonstrators rallied and went on a general offensive against the police, the ruling party office, and government buildings. Rhee misunderstood the grave situation, and thought that this incident was ignited by Communist-oriented people or North Korean spies.<sup>117</sup> As the volatile Korean situation further deteriorated, Ambassador McConaughy strongly urged Washington to take drastic and tough measures openly unless Rhee's Government immediately followed the U.S.-recommended course of action.<sup>118</sup>

Finally, on 19 April 1960, a very large demonstration led by Seoul National University students surged through Seoul and high school students joined in which instigated larger crowds to join in. This was called the 'Student Uprising' or the

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Ngo Dinh Diem. The U.S. Embassy in Seoul explained that "the U.S. never tendered congratulations on occasions of a political victory, but reserved them for the inauguration."

<sup>116</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-260, McConaughy to the State Department, 2 April 1960.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 795B.00/3-2160, 21 March 1960; DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 9, CIA Memorandum for the President, 26 April 1960. Allegations regarding communist participation in the South Korean political crisis would be repeated by Rhee's Government but Allen Dulles confirmed that no credible evidence was received to substantiate any claims of communist instigation or direct participation.



‘Student Revolution’. About 100,000 students and ordinary people demonstrated in Seoul, and demanded admission to Kyung Mu Dae—the Presidential residence. As the Presidential residence guards fired at the demonstrators, a number of protesters were killed, which resulted in complete disorder in Seoul. A total of at least 115 people lost their lives and 730 were injured. Disorder was spreading throughout South Korea in general. Emergency martial law was instituted, and this allowed the UNC to release the 15th Division of the South Korean Army in Seoul and several major important cities to cope with the situation. They stopped the rioting but explosive elements remained in the situation.<sup>119</sup> U.S. forces were placed on green alert requiring all personnel to remain on base. The American Embassy organised an emergency and evacuation committee as directed by the State Department.<sup>120</sup>

Washington reacted rapidly and issued an aide-memoire by Secretary Herter to Ambassador Yang on 19 April, forthrightly critical and implicitly threatening in tone, containing the most exceptionally severe criticism even made against the close ally. This indicated the formal U.S. view that these demonstrations reflected popular dissatisfaction over the election abuses and repressive measures unsuited to a free democracy. Washington demanded new elections from Rhee’s Government to restore the confidence of the Korean people.<sup>121</sup> In conjunction with this aide-memoire, the U.S.

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<sup>118</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-1760, McConaughy to the State Department, 17 April 1960.

<sup>119</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-1960, 19 April 1960; 895B.00/4-2260, 22 April 1960.

<sup>120</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Progress Report: Korea, Week of 18-22 April 1960.

<sup>121</sup> KPR, 701 1960/471, Information no. 192, Yang to Rhee, 21 April 1960; NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-1860, Herter to McConaughy, 19 April 1960; New York Times, 20 April 1960; Historical Office Bureau of



proclaimed that although the anti-government demonstrations were associated with Korean internal affairs, the U.S. government emphasised its role in Korean domestic affairs as patron's position. At a crucial moment of the Student Uprising, the U.S. government intervened publicly and loudly in the domestic situation in defence of the democratic rights of the Korean people.

At the height of the disorders in Seoul, McConaughy issued a statement, requesting both demonstrators and the government authorities to restore and establish order, and acknowledging demonstrators' justifiable grievances. This American intervention in Korean affairs influenced the restoration of Korean esteem for the United States. President Eisenhower and Secretary Herter agreed that the United States had special justification for interfering in Korean affairs under the current situation, which, they believed, would seriously affect U.S. interests in Korea.<sup>122</sup> The Eisenhower administration chose the Korean people against the Rhee regime. The impact of this move by the U.S. government was immediate. The U.S. government went further than issuing its resolute concern. Even though allowing the Martial Law Command of the Korean Army to use tanks, General Carter B. Magruder, who had the operational control of the South Korean forces, did not allow live ammunition, thereby playing a positive role in furthering the cause of anti-government demonstration. During the turmoil period until Rhee announced his resignation, the South Korean forces showed no intention of shooting at demonstrators. This was regarded as a decisive indication that the anti-government demonstration could destroy the Rhee regime.

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Public Affairs, A Historical Summary of United States-Korean Relations (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 130.

<sup>122</sup> DDE Library, Christian A. Herter Papers, Telephone Conversations, 19 April 1960.



Ambassador McConaughy called to meet Rhee on the night of 19 April, who was obviously ill-informed on the serious situation by dishonest associates in the cabinet, and was not aware of the severity of these demonstrations. The American Ambassador made an effort to deliver the authentic nature of the situation to Rhee, but had a limited measure of success. This lack of recognition was also highlighted, when the Ambassador delivered the aide-memoire. Rhee insisted that the reason for the present turmoil was caused by Vice President Chang's treasonous attempt to destroy his government, and emphasised that the State Department's misunderstanding of the situation had made the demonstrations go further.<sup>123</sup>

The Eisenhower administration did not attempt to interfere in Korean domestic politics until the Student Uprising of 19 April broke out. Until then, Washington considered the presidential election of 15 March a *fait accompli* even as escalating anti-government demonstrations expressed outrage at the rigged election. Unlike the passive attitude in the past, this U.S. criticism of Rhee's government was due to the fact that the current Korean situation was connected to the threats to U.S. security interests in the region. Fundamentally, Washington policymakers regarded the development of Korean democracy as being secondary, but in this situation, the U.S. was critical of the security of U.S. forces in Korea who would be involved in renewing hostilities ignited by the North Korean regime, which was keen to reunite Korea, manipulating South Korea's turmoil and instability.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> KPR, 701 1960/471, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ambassador Yang, 19 April 1960; NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-1960, McConaughy to the State Department, 19 April 1960.

<sup>124</sup> New York Times, 22 April 1960; Christian Science Monitor, 26 April 1960; C. K. Moon, Hanmi Kaldeung Yi Haebu [Anatomy of Korea-U.S. Conflicts] (Seoul: Nanam Publishing Co., 1994), pp. 30-32.



In the following days, Rhee did not fully realise the gravity of the situation until Vice-President Myon Chang resigned and two hundred university professors demonstrated calling for the resignation of Rhee and his government and the holding of new elections.<sup>125</sup> On 24 April, Rhee issued his withdrawal from partisan politics and his intention to serve the nation solely as its chief executive for the purpose of restoring confidence in his government, but Washington policy makers were sceptical that the ill-timed measure would be effective enough to restore people's reliance.<sup>126</sup> At the same time, the Eisenhower administration was somewhat cautious about Rhee's seeming attempt to divert public attention from the current situation by either attacking North Korea or initiating hostilities towards Japan. Furthermore, the Eisenhower administration considered a plan for isolating Rhee and his hard line faction in order to replace them with a new administration, as well as for action in the event of Rhee's fall or demise. Washington contemplated the contingencies, including a coup d'etat and a military takeover as a caretaker government.<sup>127</sup>

Although Rhee accepted the resignation of his cabinet as being responsible for the riots, he continued to brush aside the demands of the people and as a result demonstrations restarted in Seoul on 25 April and the climax came on 26 April 1960. Breathlessly dramatic events developed every day. While at least fifty thousand citizens demonstrated in Seoul, McConaughy urged Rhee's meeting with a delegation of demonstrators and issuing a statement on new elections. Shortly after meeting with the

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<sup>125</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-2360, McConaughy to the State Department, 23 April 1960.

<sup>126</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, A synopsis of intelligence material for President Eisenhower, 25 April 1960.

<sup>127</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-2160, Herter to McConaughy, 23 April 1960.



delegation,<sup>128</sup> Rhee offered to resign the Presidency; to hold a new elections; to have the Constitution amended to form a parliamentary responsible system; and to discharge Ki-poong Lee, who was the major party leader and the most powerful man after Rhee.<sup>129</sup>

During his meeting with Rhee, McConaughy, accompanied by the UN Commander Magruder, emphasised to Rhee the domestically dangerous and explosive situation and a further need for clarifying Rhee's statements. He went even further and called for Rhee's resignation of the presidency immediately to settle down all problems. The background of Rhee's determination to resign was considered to be his understanding of security uneasiness vis-à-vis the continued domestic agitation. However, the determination of his resignation was, in fact, dependent upon there being no alternative for him at that time. Following the Student Uprising of 19 April, whose success was evaluated as having followed on the Korean military's denial of using force, he tried to seek mutually agreeable compromising terms in continuing as a chief of state by the time of his resignation, but this attempt failed since the Korean people and opposition leaders did not accept it.

Later the same day, the National Assembly, with hard line Liberals absent, unanimously accepted Rhee's resignation. The Assembly also resolved that the presidential election of 15 March was invalid; that a new election should be held; that the constitution should be amended to provide for a parliamentary system of government; and that elections for a new National Assembly should be held

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<sup>128</sup> While meeting with group student representatives, Rhee told them that he would do whatever people wanted of him. Criticised by those representatives, he decided that the elections should be corrected.

<sup>129</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/4-2660, McConaughy to the State Department, 26 April 1960.

immediately after passage of the constitutional amendment.<sup>130</sup> The next day Rhee submitted his resignation and Chung Huh, who had recently been appointed Foreign Minister, became Acting President in the interim government. Huh's great competence and genuine desire to reach an agreement in negotiations with Japan, contrary to the attitude displayed by Rhee, made Washington policy makers give credit to his presidency.<sup>131</sup> The United States anticipated that Rhee's resignation would improve but not solve the political difficulties in South Korea, but believed that Rhee's fall would bring about a turning point for Korean-Japanese relations.<sup>132</sup>

As Washington policy makers had anticipated, the Korean political development in the wake of Rhee's fall was gloomy. A number of top military officers were becoming interested in politics and were becoming quite politically conscious. In this respect, the U.S. government paid attention to the activity of Korean military officers. Furthermore, Acting President Huh apparently did not exercise vigorous leadership. Instead he was inclined to leave the initiative to the Assembly, which was then discussing constitutional reforms. However, the Liberal Party-controlled Assembly, where a number of Liberals were manoeuvring to keep the possibility open for the return of Rhee to the Presidency, would result in a political instability. In this connection, the United States was irritated by Huh's lack of political initiative and leadership. The U.S. made an effort to bring Huh to call immediate presidential and vice-presidential elections and urged the resignation of the Assembly for the purpose of

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<sup>130</sup> FRUS, 1958-1960, vol. 18, pp. 644-45, Editorial Note.

<sup>131</sup> DDE Library, ANN Whitman File, NSC Series, 442<sup>nd</sup> NSC Meeting, Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security, 28 April 1960.

<sup>132</sup> FRUS, vol. 18, pp. 645-646, the State Department to the Embassy in Korea, 27 April 1960; *ibid.*, p. 650, note 3.



his regaining political initiative. More than anything else, Washington's apprehension stemmed from the fact that Huh's incompetence led to the Korean people's frustration, setting the stage for new and more serious demonstrations than before, and which North Korea might be prepared to manipulate and renew hostilities. To make matters worse, Huh was believed to be endeavouring to maintain the Liberal Party in power and salvage the Rhee regime to every extent possible. Washington was much more concerned by an intelligence report on Rhee's involvement in government affairs and his influence on the interim government.<sup>133</sup> The United States was very apprehensive about the implications that leftist and progressive elements could gain control of the South Korean government in the parliamentary system under the free and fair elections. Washington regarded this as very harmful for U.S. security interests in the region.<sup>134</sup>

Since Rhee's presence in Korea stimulated unsettling and destabilising situations, the Korean government decided that Rhee should leave Korea as quickly as possible. The Eisenhower administration granted Rhee political asylum in Hawaii even though this action might invite Koreans' misunderstanding that the United States had assisted Rhee to evade Korean law or judicial processes. On 29 May, Rhee left his country.<sup>135</sup>

Huh's interim government made the Eisenhower administration feel uneasy during the development of the Korean scene, particularly the dismissal of all Korean officers from the army. The U.S. military considered this step to be very serious because the caretaker government apparently did not care about the Korean military's

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<sup>133</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, OCB Series, Subject Subseries, Magruder to the JCS, 29 April 1960; NA, RG 59, 795B.00/5-360, Dillon to McConaughy, 4 May 1960; 795B.00/5-560, Dillon to McConaughy, 7 May 1960.

<sup>134</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/5-760, Herter to McConaughy, 10 May 1960.



discomfort or possible action against the Korean government.<sup>136</sup> On 15 June the National Assembly adopted a constitutional amendment bill, in which it established a bicameral legislature and a cabinet system of government. By the 29 July 1960 elections, the Democratic Party won a major victory in the House of Representatives with 177 seats out of 233 electoral districts, while dominating the balloting for the new House of Councillors, with 31 out of 58 seats. However, the factional breakdown in the Democratic party itself was evident and this, in Washington's belief, could result in political instability and domestic turmoil in the absence of charismatic leadership such as Rhee's. Temporary unity was achieved when Bo-sun Yun of the old Democratic faction was elected to the ceremonial position of President. However, the split widened when Yun nominated another member of his faction to be Prime Minister, in which the nominee was defeated, and the new faction leader Myon Chang was nominated and confirmed by the House of Representatives on 19 August.<sup>137</sup>

The Second Republic was established by the Democratic Party in July 1960. In the early stages of Chang's Government, the United States gave full support, and Chang was ready to follow American advice in his economic and foreign policies. During the Second Republic of Korea, the United States exercised its full-fledged control over the Chang regime, which acquiesced in American demands for its

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<sup>135</sup> FRUS, vol. 18, p. 663, Editorial Note.

<sup>136</sup> DDE Library, Ann Whitman File, NSC Series, 447<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 8 June 1960.

<sup>137</sup> NA, RG 59, 795B.00/6-1560, from the Embassy in Seoul, 15 June 1960; 795B.00/7-2960, 29 July 1960; 795B.00/8-1160, 11 August 1960; 795B.13/8-1960, 19 August 1960; 795B.13/9-1260, 12 September 1960. The factional tension within the Democratic Party was clarified by the cabinet appointments in which only two were designated for members of the old faction. The ensuing political



economic and foreign policies, which Rhee had previously resisted. After the fall of the Rhee regime, the United States had an opportunity to implement its strategic conception in East Asia. However, Chang's regime could not make visible progress with regard to normalised relations with Japan because of its shortcomings in domestic political power.<sup>138</sup> He encountered strong domestic opposition to hasty retreats on the fishery issue with Japan. At the same time, the worsening economic situation, mounting political instability, and unlimited idealistic freedom, overshadowed South Korea's problem with North Korea.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, the Eisenhower administration was deeply worried by the seeming development of the ROK military leaders' concern over Korean politics in conjunction with national security. Washington's deep concern would be actualised by the military coup on 16 May 1961.

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uproar led to the withdrawal of four new faction cabinet nominations and the appointment of four additional old faction members to the cabinet.

<sup>138</sup> The Second Republic's instability was based on the fact that the Democratic party was not one of the main groups involved in the revolutionary change in April 1960. The party did not have substantial coalition groups from the society. By adopting a new parliamentary system, the National Assembly became a forum for the struggle for bureaucratic power and incessant factional struggles between the old faction of former Korean Democratic Party members and the new faction of members joining the party in 1955 within the ruling Democratic party. Faced with the disintegration of its party, the administrative capacity of Chang's cabinet was remarkably weakened by the perpetual factional disputes. On the other hand, various societal interest groups were highly mobilised during the ten months of Democratic party rule. There were more than two thousand street demonstrations in Seoul.

<sup>139</sup> DDE Library, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 29, NSC 6018, 'U.S. Policy toward Korea', 28 November 1960.



In conclusion, the normalisation of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan was one of the main U.S. security objectives in the Far East during the Eisenhower administration. However, Rhee's tough resistance to normalised relations with Japan under American terms obstructed Washington's expectation of the early conclusion of an agreement between the two neighbouring countries. Rhee opposed any plans for American-Japanese cooperation in the military and economic sphere which would give Japan a stronger position in East Asian affairs. When the U.S. emphasised the strategic importance of anti-Communist arrangements in East Asia, requiring a close cooperation between Korea and Japan, Rhee asked for Washington's suspension of the Japanese build-up instead. Such a non-ideal client's stand seemed to provoke the United States to consider Rhee's removal when the Korean domestic situation started to deteriorate.

After the Korean War, military and economic aid intensified South Korea's dependence upon the United States. Consequently, there was some strain between the U.S. and South Korea over a variety of issues. The tension was exaggerated by disagreement over what economic policies could be emphasised in the decision-making process. The U.S. objective was to focus on increasing domestic savings to substitute for aid and the importation of consumer goods to reduce the high inflation rate. Rhee's Government emphasised obtaining more aid and expanding productive capacity. In the Rhee Government view, the U.S. objective was rather astigmatic; from the U.S. point of view, the Korean objective was unrealistic. Although the Korean government asked for investment goods for economic growth, the U.S. provided consumer goods in order to maintain its anti-inflationary policy. The exchange rate became a point of conflict between the two countries.



Aid was the most significant leverage when the United States had to deal with Rhee's Government. The United States used aid as a weapon to force specific policy changes. Notwithstanding this leverage, Rhee's unyielding attitude to American economic policy towards South Korea heightened tension between the two governments even though Rhee reluctantly complied with U.S. demands in the end.

The American policy of supporting the Rhee regime was based upon four considerations: (a) he had effective control in Korea, based upon his prestige, his own political shrewdness, and the inertia of an established system; (b) there seemed to be no other Korean who exercised effective leadership, and maintained political stability; (c) U.S. intervention in Korean political affairs, despite their obvious shortcomings from American perspectives, was risky and uncertain in its probable effect; and (d) there was a good deal of American sympathy for Rhee's firm anti-Communist posture.

When ideological objectives dominate the patron's priority, it will seek to present the client to the world as a show case for the patron's ideology and political system. The United States regarded South Korea as one of the attractive and exultant models which it hoped would attract the Third World. However, such a hope degenerated. The United States had a great deal of concern about Rhee's undemocratic political activities which further deteriorated with his authoritarian rule, but responded passively and took a prudent attitude in dealing with Korean domestic affairs. Since Rhee's anti-Communism was consistent with Washington's security interests in the 1950s, Rhee could enjoy firm support from the U.S. immediately before his fall, while severely damaging U.S. policy concerning the Korean Armistice, Korean-Japanese normalisation, and the development of Korean democracy.

The U.S. discontent with Rhee was not only a phenomenon of the last period of the Rhee regime, but continued throughout, from the establishment of Rhee's



government to the fall of his regime. The resolve of Rhee's supporters to win the 1960 presidential election by any necessary means, despite Rhee's declining popularity and mounting popular support for the opposition Democratic party, was manifested. The violent passage of the National Security Law, the closing of the leading opposition daily, Kyunghyang Sinmun, the execution of the Progressive Party leader Bong Am Cho, and the steady tightening at every level of the Rhee's governmental and political control were all indications of the direction in which Rhee's Government was moving.

As Rhee's Government continued to lose support in the Korean political theatres, there was much criticism of Eisenhower's Korean policy from American public opinion and liberal politicians. As a result, the U.S. government endeavored to put pressure on Rhee and his government to moderate their policies, but such pressures were increasingly ignored by Rhee. Many officials in Washington, deeply involved in Korean affairs, were dissatisfied with continuing American inaction, and the Embassy in Korea warned Washington about the possibility of disorder if the trends of 1959 continued. But any course of the Eisenhower administration's action seemed feasible to reverse these trends.

Before Rhee's government projected a rigged presidential elections on 15 March 1960, the United States had expressed their concern about the National Security Law and the cessation of publication of the opposition newspaper, Kyunghyang Sinmun, forced by Rhee's Government. However, these actions only reflected the U.S. standpoint, and with the view of not provoking Rhee's government, even though Washington complained about the Korean situation. Consequently, such American methods did not succeed in transforming Rhee's government into accommodating the direction the U.S. wished for. On the contrary, Rhee attained his objective in Korean domestic politics through these events despite U.S. interference. As for the National



Security Law, the U.S. was given the Korean government's promise to conduct the law cautiously, which was to save Washington's face. Kyunghyang Sinmun resumed publication after the April Student Uprisings. Rhee succeeded in preventing U.S. intervention on Korean affairs until April 1960.

However, with the advent of the April Student Uprising, Rhee's government changed its attitude and listened to American protest. The Korean government's altered position resulted from the fact that confronted with a toll of hundreds of dead and injured, the Korean government was in a weak position to break the deadlock. Confirming the Korean populace's negative stance against Rhee's regime, Washington turned to a firm and unyielding position towards Rhee.

The client state desperately needs its patron's support and, in many cases, provides extensive concessions to the patron state in exchange. The client state wants to tap into the patron's security resources without surrendering any measure of its autonomy. On the contrary, the patron seeks to exercise some measure of control over the client's political, economic, or geographic resources. Crises occur at the client level as small states pursue their own national priorities and security objectives which may not be compatible with the objectives of their patron states. The patron state attempts to accrue clients through which it can gain some form of advantage over its competitor. As long as Rhee did not follow U.S. security policy in the Far East vis-à-vis Japan after the Korean armistice, the United States had no choice but to look for another alternative to preserve its national and security interests in the region. With the advent of the Korean people's action against Rhee, which was viewed as successful, the Eisenhower administration took a drastic measure to support the demonstrators, rather than backing Rhee's regime. Unlike the situation of the Korean armistice, in which the United States accepted most of Rhee's demands in order to prevent a direct conflict between the

superpowers, a less strained environment both regionally and internationally gave the U.S. more room for exerting control over its uncooperative client, Syngman Rhee, and decide to give up its support for him.



## 5. Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, this thesis has identified certain prominent features of big power and small state relations in the paradigm of patron-client state relationships. This paradigm was applied to the relationship between the United States and South Korea during the Eisenhower-Rhee presidential period.

Patron-client relationships are fundamentally unstable. This arises from the basic incompatibilities of their differing objectives. The patron tries to exert some degree of control over the client. This is not always favourable to the client, who on the other hand seeks security without surrendering any measure of its autonomy to the patron. This incompatibility is further reinforced by the dramatically different world views and the relative scope of their political visions. The patron state looks at the international system from an all-encompassing global perspective. It tries to understand the interactions between the different regions and its different bilateral relationships. By contrast, given the scope of its foreign policy interests, the client state has limited interests in international politics. More importantly, the client is more often confronted with threats to its national survival stemming from a variety of sources. On this account, two partners operate from a different framework with no common appreciation of the global implications of the superpowers' confrontation.

The other characteristic of patron-client relationships forms the basis for the special goals the patron seeks. These goals dictate the patron's valuation of the relationship and the price the patron is willing to pay to maintain it. The client is a prominent factor in the patron's competitiveness. The more advantage the patron gains over its rivals through its association with its client, the more the patron will value the



relationship, often in apparent contradiction to the material benefits which the patron derives from the relationship. Under such circumstances, the patron may surrender a substantial measure of its political and military flexibility to the client in order to meet the client's demands, to ensure that the relationship endures, and to protect the strategically advantageous goals the patron perceives. When goals of strategic advantage dominate the patron's calculations, the client may enjoy a position of great influence in the relationship. In this relationship, there is some room for bargaining in the relations of asymmetrical military and economic dependency. The client state may be able to manipulate the patron state if the latter's vital interests are not at stake.

As the Cold War intensified in the 1950s, small states within each bloc could manoeuvre to achieve their own interests as long as they stuck to the ideology of the superpowers. Each of the superpower's primary interest was in extending its own alliance amongst small and uncommitted states at the expense of its competitor and keeping its rival from expanding its influence amongst its own small allies. However, small allies required the existence of the other bloc so as to maintain their value as allies for their own bloc. Under these circumstances, small allies could convert the alliance with big powers into an instrument of their policies .

The relationship between Rhee and the United States was much more complicated than simple compliance with the client state. Even though continuing support from the United States was indispensable to him, Rhee insisted on maintaining his own position on many policies and this led to conflict with the Eisenhower administration. Having had troubles with the armistice negotiations at the end of the Korean War, the United States realised that Rhee was not the ideal client. As Rhee realised that South Korean forces could not march north in pursuit of unification without American support, he had to concentrate on achieving more immediate objectives: obtaining a mutual security



pact with the U.S.; building military strength in South Korea sufficient to defend against renewed aggression; and obtaining economic aid to make his country self-sufficient. Even though Rhee's Government was under American influence, Rhee attempted to exploit the relationship.

Rhee did so through a combination of unreliability and making concessions to U.S. demands. The bargaining tactics he employed were bluffs, threats, intransigence, and unpredictability. Once President Eisenhower was determined to end the Korean War without victory by means of an armistice, Rhee threatened to withdraw his forces from UN control and to fight alone against the Communists until he unified Korea. He knew that if South Korean forces were used for unauthorised offensive operations, it would provoke Communist reprisals. Consequently, the armistice would be suspended, and so he would engage U.S. forces in further combat. Rhee's threat to take unilateral action was less credible, but, at the same time, his propensity for rash action increased. Rhee knew that his conditions were not realistic, but equally worthwhile, since they presented a way in which South Korea could extract major concessions from the United States.

When the big power depends on supportive actions by the small ally in order to advance its interests, the small ally increases its bargaining power not only in one issue but it can also use this leverage to maximise its overall influence.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after Rhee's sudden release of POWs, thereby jeopardising America's effort to come to an armistice agreement with the Communists, the Eisenhower administration speeded up its response to Rhee's demands to prevent further incidents. The U.S. failed to persuade

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<sup>1</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 11.



Rhee to accept an armistice agreement without reprisals. Since the U.S. had to pay attention to its global priorities and objectives that limited the conflict with Korea, it was often forced to soften its position, and submit to Rhee's tactics. The Eisenhower administration agreed to conclude a bilateral defence treaty with South Korea and to provide a large amount of military and economic aid following the Korean War.

As Robert Keohane describes in his analysis of the dilemma of the United States and its small allies, the superpower cannot easily translate its enormous military, economic, and political strength into effective influence over small states. U.S.-ROK relations before the end of the Geneva Conference provide a clear illustration of this phenomenon. Even though Rhee had agreed to the armistice, the continued question of Korean unification, along with his unpredictability, enabled him to manoeuvre and embarrass the United States before and during the Conference. When the U.S. and the other three big powers—the Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain—decided to hold a conference in Geneva for a peaceful settlement of the Korean and Indochinese problems, Rhee opposed attending the Conference until the Eisenhower administration promised further military assistance to his country and firm American support for the ROK's position at the Geneva Conference. To show his determination, Rhee went as far as to declare the possibility of taking unilateral military action against North Korea if his demands were not taken seriously by the United States. Moreover, to Rhee's advantage, the U.S. devoted itself to negotiating with Rhee, principally to avoid being blamed not only by the Communist bloc, but also by its allies for the likely failure of the conference due to the ROK's absence. Rhee's bargaining position was further reinforced by the fact that distracted by the diverse interests of its allies at the conference, the United States had to re-evaluate South Korea's important role as a faithful client, for it had been a mouthpiece for America's hard-line anti-Communist policy following the Korean War.



For South Korea, the alliance with the United States enhanced its own ability to resist external aggression and internal collapse by the America's providing assistance to the Korean military and economy. Rhee and his government would justify their leadership by emphasising their success in securing economic and military support from the United States. Through the Mutual Security Treaty, American forces were stationed in Korea, thereby guaranteeing a U.S. security commitment to South Korea in the long-term. The United States had a major interest in South Korea. It was a valuable frontline base against communist expansion in the Far East.

The fundamental aim of a U.S.-South Korea military relationship was to contain the North Korean military threat as part of the larger struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. South Korea was regarded by the U.S. as a front-line base for defending Japan and the Pacific region. The loss of South Korea would have negative repercussions for the free world. This strategic view justified massive military assistance to South Korea. The two countries' military relationship has been regarded as one-directional, in that the relationship was dominated by U.S. political and national interests. The objectives of Rhee's Government were to keep a significant number of U.S. troops stationed in its territory, and to strengthen the ROK forces.

In this period, the two countries' military relationship was not coordinated. Given the asymmetry of capability between the two sides, while the U.S. notified unilateral decisions to South Korea, Rhee ardently opposed these and took a bargaining position with Eisenhower. In the case of the redeployment of U.S. forces from Korea, the Eisenhower administration regarded it as being necessary because of the burden on the U.S. budget. The U.S. government was much worried about the likelihood of the South Korean forces' withdrawal from U.S. operational control if it was carried out in the original plan. Considering Rhee's decision on the release of POWs prior to the Korean



armistice, Washington was forced to be worried about a recurrence of a similar incident. For this reason, the United States decided to leave two infantry divisions in South Korea. On the specific problem of the ROK force reduction, Rhee took the position that he could not accept the plan unless ROK forces were to be equipped with the same quality of modern weapons as those used by U.S. forces in Korea. This demand, he knew, was out of the question as far as U.S. military policy was concerned. Such a tactic was a bargaining ploy. Rhee had to ask for the maximum possible from his partner, and, then, withdraw to a position which the U.S. would tolerate. To achieve this, Rhee managed to exploit the interaction of the American power system, in which American policy is largely the outcome of clashes and compromises among separate interest groups and bureaucratic units. Rhee manipulated Congressmen and the leaders of American public opinion, who were either vigorously anti-Communist or sympathetic to Rhee. The Eisenhower administration modified its position and the original plan could not be implemented.

The U.S.-ROK governments did not harmonize the issue of normalised relations between South Korea and Japan. To South Korea, Japan was its enemy. Accordingly, the American policy of rebuilding Japan and encouraging it to restore its dominance in Asia as a counterbalance to China was criticised vehemently by Rhee. The U.S. looked upon its role as soothing this animosity and eventually bringing together and coordinating the policies of its two allies. Rhee rejected such an unpalatable plan.

Rhee's strong anti-Japanese attitude became a major obstacle to developing a regional triangular security system in East Asia, and linking South Korea to the Japanese economy, both of which were the United States' ideal objectives after the Korean armistice. However, Rhee opposed any plan for a stronger Japanese position in U.S. eyes in Far Eastern affairs. Rhee's uncooperative attitude meant that U.S.-South



Korean relations deteriorated further towards the end of the 1950s. Crisis occurs at the client level as a small state pursues its own national priorities and security objectives which might not be compatible with the objectives of its patron state. Such a non-ideal client's stance by Rhee provoked the U.S. to consider his exclusion from the Korean political scene. When the Korean people attempted to resist Rhee's undemocratic activities, Washington therefore supported the people's will.

Under the Rhee regime, the alliance with the United States was almost the only reliable guarantee for South Korea's survival. The viability of South Korea was enhanced by support from the U.S., but this support was obtained at a price. The more an aid package constitutes an important part of the small state's fiscal and administrative operations, the more limited the small state's external autonomy is, where the big power retains major interests and chooses to exercise its leverage. South Korea was bound to concede the participation of American officials in its policy-making process.

While the United States and South Korea had a common interest in preventing communist expansion, the Mutual Security Treaty and the economic agreements between the two governments placed restraints upon the South Korean government. Militarily, the ROK forces were under the operational control of the UNC in which South Korea would have to endure the scepticism as to whether it was a truly independent state not only from the Communist bloc but also from the free world. Economically, the size and composition of the South Korean budget was regulated and based upon certain military goals mutually agreed between the two governments and on advice and screening by the Military Assistance Advisory Group given to Korea on an annual basis.



The policies of the United States and South Korea conflicted in several important respects. Firstly, Rhee wanted to roll back Communism and unify Korea. The United States favoured both goals but not at the risk of precipitating a direct clash with mainland China and the Soviet Union. Secondly, Rhee desired to strengthen the ROK forces to defeat North Korea. The U.S. was not willing to support the build-up of the ROK forces for likely military hostilities. Thirdly, Rhee wanted massive economic aid to make South Korea self-sufficient. The U.S. favoured the granting of economic aid only to keep South Korea stable. To sum up, South Korea preferred to have a stable relationship, based upon its interest, with the U.S., but the latter preferred to base its relationship on a calculation of its own national interest.

The major problems during the second half of the 1950s were increasingly political: Rhee's continued insistence on unification by force, his refusal to normalise relations with Japan in spite of American desires, and conflicts over the question of Rhee's undemocratic activities in domestic affairs. In order to pursue its objectives against the big power's influence, a small state should be able to control its domestic politics. Domestic solidarity is, therefore, a prerequisite for a small state to achieve its policies independently.<sup>2</sup> Rhee had already consolidated domestic power while taking a bargaining position with the United States during the Korean War and post-armistice period in the first half of the 1950s. During this period, he was fully able to exert his bargaining skill, and to prevent U.S. intervention in Korean domestic political affairs. Rhee was left as a strong anti-Communist leader, in a manner which, for a while, enabled him to enjoy his political legitimacy based on domestic as well as international

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<sup>2</sup> Ho Jae Lee, Han Kook Woegyo Jungchakui Yisangkwa Hyonsil [Ideals and Reality of Korean Diplomatic Policy] (Seoul: Pub Moon Sa, 1980), pp. 25-33.



assessments. However, in the late 1950s, with the emergence of peaceful coexistence between the U.S. and Soviet Union, this became questionable. Consequently, his forceful unification policy was considered by the Korean people unlikely to be successful. At the same time, his declining popularity and the mounting popular support for democratic principles paved the way for enhancing U.S. control over Rhee and his government, whereby Rhee changed his attitude and conformed to the American demands.

The nature of a patron-client state relationship is determined by the objectives sought and the extent to which these objectives are realised. Fundamentally, such relationships are inherently unstable because of the conflict between the patron's desire to control the client, which, on the contrary, tries to maintain its autonomy. As long as Rhee had not followed U.S. security policy vis-à-vis Japan following the Korean armistice, combined with his uncooperative position towards economic policy and democratic rule, the U.S. realised it needed to seek other alternatives to preserve its national and strategic interests in the Far East. Unlike the situation of the Korean armistice and the Geneva Conference in the 1953-54 period, the low risk environment at the end of the 1950s enabled Washington to have a sufficient room for exerting control over the Rhee regime.

From 1948 to 1960, South Korea was dominated by its President, Syngman Rhee, whose prestige became increasingly damaged from the political and social realities of South Korea. When ideological objectives dominated the patron's priority, it would seek to present the client to the world as a show case for the patron's ideology and political system. Such an expectation slowly disappeared along with Rhee's growing undemocratic political activities. The United States continued to express its discontent over this issue both implicitly and explicitly in the whole period of Rhee's era. His

popularity and political leadership, in the last quarter of the 1950s, was further compromised not only by the unfortunate consequences of his preconceived opinions and administrative shortcomings but also by the growing power of his political associates. However, Washington's active involvement in Korean internal politics did not begin until it recognised the serious consequences in terms of the U.S. interests in Korea. Following the rigged presidential elections in 1960, there were a series of nationwide riots. Along with the April Student Uprising, the United States had a good chance to replace the intractable Rhee regime with a government that followed U.S. guidelines both domestically and internationally.



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